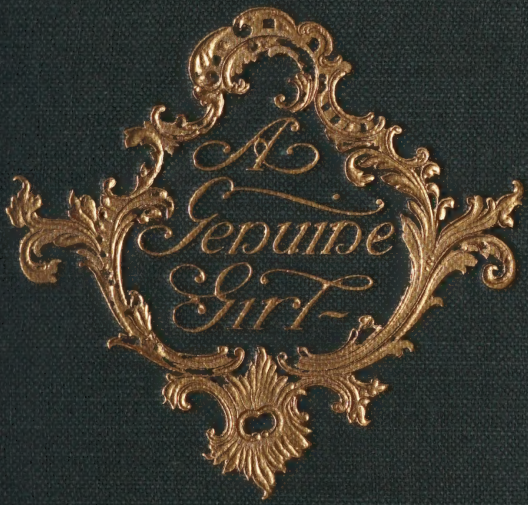
A Genuine Girl

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Books by Mrs. Jeanie Gould Lincoln

THE LUCK OF RATHCOOLE. Illustrated.
A JAVELIN OF FATE.
MARJORIE'S QUEST.
A GENUINE GIRL.
AN UNWILLING MAID.
A PRETTY TORY.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

A GENUINE GIRL

BY

JEANIE GOULD LINCOLN

AUTHOR OF "MARJORIE'S QUEST"

"*Give me a form, give me a face*
That makes simplicity a grace."
BEN JONSON.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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To the dearest heart in the world I send
  Greeting, tender and true,
The book had never been written, my friend,
  If it had not been for you.

To you, therefore, whatever there be
  Of merit the lids between,
The praise be given, and not to me,
  For you are what I only seem.

PREFACE.

THE author has received so many requests by letter and otherwise, from a kindly public who know her through "Marjorie's Quest," to write another book upon the same lines, that she has been encouraged to publish a continuation of that work in the present form. It is, however, a separate and distinct story, although most of the principal characters in it are old friends.

That "Marjorie's Quest" has remained a favorite for so many years is a source of great gratification, and the author, while thanking the many readers who have given her their generous support and friendly praise, ventures to bespeak in Marjorie's name their continued interest in "A Genuine Girl."

WASHINGTON, D. C.
August 15, 1896.

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A GENUINE GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

PHYLIS TELLS A STORY.

"YOUNG LADIES!"

Twenty heads — blonde heads, chestnut heads, auburn heads (even one with the unmistakable and unlovely tint called "carroty") — raised themselves in an attitude of attention as their owners prepared to leave their desks and the subdued rustle of papers filled the air.

"Young ladies!" — Miss Clark paused for a second, and with a half-smile surveyed the dancing eyes fixed upon her; "after the German class you are excused."

"Half-holiday?" murmured a daring voice from the centre of the room.

"On account of the indisposition of the principal, Mrs. Paulding, you may leave school after one o'clock. During recess the history and English language classes can

come to me for Monday's papers ; the pupils not included in these classes may leave at once."

There was a simultaneous rush for the school-room door, and half a dozen merry girls made a dash for the staircase.

"Girls, let's eat our lunch first," said Maud Rivers, flying up two steps at a time, closely followed by a tall girl with auburn braids, who endeavored to beat her at the goal.

"Maud's appetite can be depended upon," cried Cora Bates. "My private opinion is that nothing but a cormorant can compete with her on that score."

Into the room like a whirlwind swept the girls, and open flew the lunch-baskets, for six healthy school-girls are not apt to wait for ceremony at recess.

"Where's Phil?" sung out Cora, poising a Maryland biscuit aloft ; "she may have half my share of the 'Club lunch' if she'll tell us one of her stories."

"Wish I could tell such stories," mumbled Maud, between bites of an apple ; "wonder where she gets them?"

"Makes them up," said Estelle Lawrence.

"Or copies them out of a magazine," said Hester Dulaney disagreeably.

"Now you just hush," said the tall girl with auburn braids, who rejoiced in the name of Caledonia Page, and was the owner of a delicious drawl. "You girls he-ah have no imagination; Phylis was bawn with lots of it, so mawma says."

"Bother your mawma!" cried Cora, as the door swung open, and a tall, slender figure appeared on the threshold; a girl who, from the poise of her head and her erect, graceful carriage, commanded admiration. Phylis Gray was a born leader, and, had she but known it, dominated every girl in the school through her directness and simplicity.

"Have a biscuit, Phil," said Cora, making room on the sofa. "We thought we 'd eat lunch before going home."

"Thanks," said Phylis, dropping her books and swinging herself on the table by one hand; "glad I did n't get here too late; I came off without breakfast this morning. Oh, girls, what do you think made me late?"

"Have n't an i-dea," drawled Caledonia.

"Well, it was a letter — a letter from Teddy Frost. Beg his pardon, that 's what mamma calls him. I don't know him yet, though I shall soon."

"What 's his name in good American?" said Hester.

"Lieutenant Jonathan Edwards Frost, U. S. A.," said Phylis, "Company B in the — Cavalry."

"And why Teddy?" quoth Maud; she was a girl who believed in detail.

"Jonathan Edwards is a trifle long for familiar converse, my child," said Phylis; "and, moreover, he 's the sort of a man, papa says, who always has a score of nicknames. Why, ever so long ago, when he was a bit of a boy, he was given the name of 'Puck' because he was forever in mischief, and a perfect imp as to scrapes. Teddy, — well, that 's short for 'Edwards,' I suppose; I 'll ask mamma. Maud, just hand over a piece of that spice cake; I 'm sure there 's more in the pile than you want."

"Go on, Phil, what was the letter about?"

"Oh, the letter," said Phylis; "it was n't as much the letter as a story which mamma told me about him — the kind of a story I 'd go without my breakfast any day to hear, too."

"Tell it to us, do; there 's a dear!" called out Cora, from her nest among the sofa pillows. "We were just longing for one of your stories as you came in."

"You were?" said Phylis, laughing; "but this is a real, true, living story and not any make-believes. You see," tucking her slim, brown hands under her knees, and surveying the girls from her vantage ground of the school-table, — "you see, Lieutenant Frost is just ordered in from the frontier, where he 's been fighting the Indians for ever so long, ever since he left West Point, where papa got him appointed years ago, and he is to be stationed at Fort Meyer across the Potomac, where two companies of his regiment are ordered in from Fort Russell. The story which mamma told me happened several years ago, when the outbreak occurred with the Cheyenne Indians, just before that awful massacre of General Custer and his men. Teddy was with his company on a scout, and one day they had a fight with a small band of Indians who endeavored to ambush the soldiers. It was not very far from the place where the chief body of hostile Cheyennes were gathered, and, somehow, among the band who attacked were several squaws, who, apparently, had followed the braves. Anyway, when the soldiers beat off the Indians they came upon a dying Indian woman, with a little baby

— a papoose, you know, girls, tied on her back, the way they carry them.

"Teddy found the poor woman, and he and the soldiers tried to save her life, but she only lived a little while, and she begged, oh! so hard, in the little bit of English she knew, that they would save her baby. So Teddy promised he would. The men told him it would be very difficult, even dangerous, to carry the little thing into camp; indeed, the sergeant, an old Indian fighter, said it was almost as much as their lives were worth to try it, for it was coming nightfall and they had to go very quietly; the least noise might bring down more Indians upon them.

"'Very well,' said Teddy quietly; 'I'll take the responsibility of my own acts, Sergeant. I'll carry the baby, and if we have to run the gauntlet of another band, you can lead the men; I'll ride on my own account.'

"So they started, and after an hour or more the moon came up, which added a good deal to their danger. So Teddy gave orders that the men should picket their horses and stop on the bank of the small stream until daybreak; and leaving the sergeant in command, he set out to ride into camp with the baby.

"The rest of the story mamma heard from Captain Ferguson, because Teddy never wrote her anything about it, except that he 'd 'been lucky enough to fetch a squealing baby through a nest of Indian sarpints,' and she thought it was only some of Teddy's nonsense. But it was pretty serious nonsense, according to Captain Ferguson. In the middle of the night the camp was startled by three shots and then the yells of Indians, not far away. The relief sprang into saddles and started in the direction of the sounds, and they got there just in time, for Teddy's horse had been shot under him. He had laid the poor baby on the ground, hiding it behind his horse, and there he stood, pistol in hand, fighting for his life against odds so fearful that five minutes' longer delay on the part of the relief would have ended it — for Teddy!" — and Phylis's voice was choked, and the little brown hand dashed something moist from her long eyelashes.

"Mercy me!" gasped Cora, bouncing out of the sofa pillows; "you don't mean to say that 's true, Phylis Gray? Why it 's just like one of Captain King's nice stories."

"True!" echoed Phylis indignantly; "why, I told you it was true in the begin-

ning, and for my part," shaking her head wisely, "I think it's just like Teddy."

"Why, I thought you said you did not know him," said Estelle Lawrence.

"Only when I was a child, Estelle; but I just guess that the boy who kept his promise when a rebel soldier threatened to hang his pet skye dog before his eyes, because he would n't betray my own dear papa to the enemy, would save an Indian baby as Teddy did! Bless you! George Washington is n't in it!" With which choice slang Phylis jumped off the table into the centre of the room.

"Well," said Caledonia, even more slowly than usual, a sparkle lighting up her placid brown eyes; "I don't quite know what you mean, Phil, when you talk about 'rebels.'"

"Don't you?" said Phylis; "you might ask Miss Clark to explain when the term came into use. Nonsense, Cal, I always call things by their lawful names, but I really had no intention of offending you; let's shake hands over the bloody chasm."

Whereat Caledonia accepted the hand so frankly extended, and the girls laughed in chorus, because it was "just like Phil, you know." But Phylis, a little troubled in her

mind lest she had been guilty of a rudeness, as soon as she had put her books together and bundled into her jacket and hat, invited Caledonia to come in that afternoon and have a cup of chocolate.

"It 's mamma's reception day, and I always am allowed to have chocolate and cake in my little morning-room upstairs, and the girls sometimes drop in. I 've meant to ask you for a long time, Cal, and I hope you 'll come to-day."

Caledonia gave pleased assent to the agreeable proposition, and, with a smiling nod and a collective "Good-by, girls," to the others, Phylis ran lightly downstairs.

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHAT RETROSPECTIVE.

"THAT is quite right, Félice, thank you; now my sable furs, please, and the visiting-book from the boudoir. Say to Miss Phylis that I shall be at home by five o'clock, as we are dining out to-night, and she will have her cup of chocolate with me at six. And, oh, Félice, my cardcase;" and Mrs. Reginald Gray, at last equipped for her round of visits and afternoon engagements, stepped into her brougham and was wheeled off down Massachusetts Avenue.

It was such a fair, lovely face which looked out above the Russian sables; even in the old days Marjorie Clive had not been clothed with more simplicity of spirit than now. Nothing, as her husband was wont to say, spoiled her; the same truth and directness, the same gentle dignity had survived years of indulgence and loving worship on his part. Marjorie was Marjorie still; in the world, but not a worldly woman; a leader by birth and

position, but ever ready to place herself last —a friend first; devoted to the Rex of her girlhood, but able to hold the attention and admiration of the brilliant scientists and public men whose names were household words in Senator Gray's home. Her mental poise was so delicately adjusted that few, very few women appreciated it, and nothing ever gave her husband such keen enjoyment as to hear Marjorie, in her gentle, high-bred fashion, pull the kernel from the nut of some clever intellectual discussion, and never seem to realize her own triumph.

But Marjorie's life had held its trials, even after those of her checkered girlhood. Four children born to her had died in early infancy, and the mother heart, bruised and torn, even yet hardly dared be tranquil. Gerald, the third son, was now a Junior at Yale, and Phylis, the only daughter, had been from early infancy such a gay, sparkling bit of humanity that the very idea of illness seemed foreign to her. Even to-day, as Mrs. Gray drove up the avenue, she was arranging the detail of a birthday party to be given for Phylis, and it is doubtful whether, waking or sleeping, she was ever long absent from her mother's mind.

At the close of the Civil War, where Reginald Gray had served in the Federal army with distinction, he had resumed his profession of the law, and remained at the bar until political honors were given him; this was his second term as United States Senator from his native State. From their some years' residence in Washington the Grays had become a social centre, and Marjorie's happiness was much increased by the addition to their circle, two years before, of Meta Livingston, — our old friend Meta, — now Mrs. Winship, whose husband had been appointed one of the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court. Mrs. Winship had become a great favorite, socially, and in the home-circle her companionship was invaluable to Marjorie, while Phylis admired and quoted "cousin Meta" upon all occasions, and held her only second to her mother in her affections. The spirit of fun and daring which went to make up Phylis's character appealed directly to Mrs. Winship, for, as she said, "it came to her straight from Rex; Marjorie's bump of mischief had never had chance for development, if indeed she had ever possessed one."

Mrs. Winship had two girls of her own,

— one, Clarice, married the year before, the other, Dorothy, a little girl of twelve, very much petted and a trifle spoiled by everybody.

Of the others — the dear old friends who surrounded Marjorie's girlhood — there were but few remaining. Judge Gray, in the fullness of his manhood and the height of his distinguished career, had gone calmly forth to join the "great majority," and Marjorie had wept bitter tears for Rex's father as if he had been her own. For she could never forget that but for Judge Gray's humanity and benevolence she would never have known her birth or parentage.

From the fact of her being an only daughter, and the youngest child, one might suppose that Phylis Gray was in a fair way to become that too common result, alas! of American rearing — the independent, flippant, partially educated and wholly self-reliant, half-grown girl of the period. Heredity, in her case, was one important factor of prevention; the other, a mother and father who governed with firm, yet kindly hand. Phylis had never felt a blow, corporal punishment being a horror unknown in the Gray family. She was a very decided little lady in her ideas, however, and one of the

household by-words was a speech of hers, as the story was told how at three years old the tiny, golden-haired maid had said in great wrath, and with much dignity, to her mamma, when deprived of some trifle she desired, "I know what I *want*, and I *mean* what I say."

Her practical, clear head was fortunately a form of ballast to the intensely poetic temperament which came to her in the line of direct inheritance, and which her father most judiciously endeavored to curb. From the time she was eight years old, when she convulsed the family by writing an ode of fourteen verses to her Irish nurse on her birthday, beginning, —

> "There are no friends to greet thee
> On this thy natal day!"

up to the present, when she wrote poems, plays, and stories to be recited (in the greatest privacy) to her schoolmates, her creative talent had always been a gift enjoyed and smiled over, but never flattered or unduly encouraged. On one occasion, when an injudicious friend informed Phylis that she was especially gifted, the child opened her violet eyes to their widest, and, to her mother's great amusement, replied, "How

funny! I beg your pardon, but I 'm sure you mistake; papa never says more than 'very well,' to my flights, and he 's the best judge, you know." Evidently there was no making an infant prodigy of Phylis!

Gerald (her "big brother, Jerry," as she always called him) was the pride and idol of Phylis's heart, and with true feminine inconsistency she teased him from dawn to darkness. When Jerry was a little lad, he and some of his boy friends had a fancy for keeping Bantam chickens, and they formed a club, as they called it, in which each had equal rights and paid equal fees. But an older boy, whose ideas of *meum* and *tuum* were slightly hazy, sold some chickens to the little fellows and then demanded more than his just dues in payment. It happened that Phylis and Gerald were going away for the summer, and the morning of their departure several of the "Club" and the big boy aforesaid appeared to claim Gerald's share of expenses, still unpaid. Gerald and his sister had just received two nice, new one-dollar greenbacks, each, from their father, and they were holding consultation under a big tree in the yard, back of the house, as to what disposition they should make of the

money. Out into the yard proceeded the boys, and there arose, speedily, a hubbub, which brought Mrs. Gray to the dining-room window, where, to her astonishment, she beheld Phylis fairly dancing up and down with rage and excitement.

"It's not true," cried the six-year-old champion, "and you 're a mean, horrid fibber, that's what you are! Give me back one of Gerald's dollars this minute, do you hear? He only owes you for one, and you took two, and I *won't* have my brother imposed upon," and there was a rush of blue slippers, a whirl of white skirts, and driving the boy (twice as big as she) into a corner against the wall, Phylis snatched the money out of his hand, slapped him with all her tiny might, and flew into the house, panting and triumphant, leaving consternation behind her and Gerald apologizing in distress for his fiery little sister.

Phylis had always been more of a "tom-girl" (as Gerald dubbed her at an early period of their career) than the ordinary, and she was absolutely fearless as far as animals were concerned. She had pets of all kinds, and, up to date, was the happy possessor of a parrot who "swore like our

army in Flanders," but, fortunately, in Spanish; a rather superannuated guinea-pig, a frisky fox-terrier, and a pair of beautiful Angora cats, whose tails closely resembled the white plume of Navarre, and who rejoiced in the name of the "Heavenly Twins." They were extremely like those historic characters in many of their attributes, and rendered the fox-terrier's life a burden to him by stealing his breakfast and unearthing his hidden bones from the yard, which was his chosen place for depositing a *bonne bouche*. But far above these, dear though they were to the heart of Phylis, was her horse, a beautiful dark bay, with black points, a mettlesome creature, and full of life and spirit as Phylis herself. From the time she was able to hold the reins she had driven a fast mare of her father's, as she sat by his side, her eyes big with delight, and frequently crying out, "Hold on to me, papa; Daisy 's pulling me off the seat!" when the pace grew rapid. Her grandfather, General Clive, who was Phylis's most abject slave, mounted the child one day when she was but eight years old, during the annual visit of the Grays to Craignest, their beautiful country seat in the interior of the State of

New York, and was so delighted with her pluck and ease in the saddle that he vowed then and there that she should never lack a mount while he could give her one. That first pony — what a treasure it was! Phylis rode him every day and all days; with a saddle, or, cow-boy fashion, without one; and, one morning after her grandfather had searched everywhere for the child, he found her down in the stable yard busily engaged in washing the pony's feet, while the groom stood patiently beside her, holding the pail of water.

On the afternoon when Mrs. Gray started forth to pay the visits with which this chapter opens she concluded, as it grew dark, to drive down to the Senate Chamber and bring her husband home in the brougham, as was frequently her custom. As she sat at the entrance door, waiting while her footman went into the Capitol to find the Senator, a tall man in an officer's undress uniform passed her, then turned and came to the carriage door.

"Oh, Captain Ferguson," said Mrs. Gray, greeting him cordially, "you are the very person I wanted to meet. Can you tell me when Teddy Frost will arrive? I

had a letter from him last night, but it was from Chicago, and he fancied he might be detained there."

"His orders have been changed, Mrs. Gray," said Captain Ferguson. "I received a telegram this afternoon, and Frost with his company are due here to-morrow. Of course his first report for duty will be to you, after myself."

"Are you not glad he is coming? I am so eager to see the dear fellow; you must not forget that I once brought him safely through the three 'R's', away down in Virginia, in war-times. I 'm sure I was a very bad teacher, for Teddy certainly writes the most abominable of scrawls."

"Perhaps West Point has something to answer for in that regard. Yes, I am truly glad Teddy is ordered here. What a rush the girls will make for him; you know he has a fine eye for the lassies."

"'Whistle an' I 'll come to you, my lad,' for — whom?" said a voice behind the Captain, as Rex Gray, of war-time memory, now one of our lawmakers in the Senate Chamber, appeared at the carriage door. Handsomer than ever, with the touch of silver on his temples which recalled his stately father,

and with the same merry, ringing voice, Marjorie felt the old thrill of pride as she looked at him, which is the test of happy wifehood.

"It's Teddy, Rex; Captain Ferguson says he will be here to-morrow."

"I consider it a proof of high regard on my part that no pangs of jealousy overcome me at that intelligence," said her husband; "though truth to say, Ferguson, I should not now be adorning the Capitol had it not been for that same youngster's gallant conduct at the age of eight. What? you never heard the story? Come and dine with us to-morrow, and Marjorie shall tell you. Good-by," and Senator Gray entered his carriage and drove down the avenue.

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW DRESS.

THE October sun shone bright and clear on the yellow and red leaves of the maples and gave a richer tint of brown to the oaks, while the broad blue Potomac flashed and gleamed, a thing of life, below the hills, on top of which floated the stars and stripes at Fort Meyer. For there are few spots more picturesque than this fort on the Virginia hills, the gateway, as it were, to the broad slopes of Arlington, where hundreds of the Army of the Republic now keep in grand unchanging silence "the bivouac of the dead."

On the parade ground, their sorrel and black horses tossing their heads as if eager to hear the bugles sound advance, were four companies of cavalry, their guidons floating, their men and officers on dress parade. It was the first parade drill since the arrival of the — cavalry at their new station, and the Secretary of War had signi-

fied his intention of being present; therefore the Commandant had invited a number of Washingtonians to meet him, and a score of handsome equipages filled with men and women were drawn up alongside the fence which defined the parade, to watch from there the evolutions of the men. It was a new form of amusement to the fashionable world, for the Commandant was a famous Indian fighter, recently ordered East, and the gallant soldier's name was a passport to all the circles of our most cosmopolitan city.

Among the carriages on the north side of the parade ground was a drag; the horses were bright bays and the servants wore light liveries. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Winship occupied the centre seat, and in front of them were two merry girls, Phylis and her particular friend, Estelle Lawrence, with Dorothy Winship between them.

"Oh, is n't it just lovely!" cried Estelle. "What stunning colors blue and yellow are; I think I shall wear them after this."

"Don't go back on the Yale blue," said Phylis, "or Jerry will get after you. Look at the horses, Estelle; are n't the blacks just dears? There 's an officer on a sorrel

that might almost match my 'Kaiser' in size and shape. Mamma, mamma, please look," as the officer in question rode up to the officer of the day who was not far from them; "is n't that Teddy?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Gray, in pleased surprise; "how could you tell him at this distance, Phylis?"

"Pure guesswork," said Phylis, with a laugh; "or perhaps a vague suggestion of his old photograph which hangs in the study."

"Marjorie," said Mrs. Winship, in an undertone, "don't you think the 'pomp and panoply' of a military life just a little bit dangerous for a girl of Phylis's age and temperament?"

"Phylis?" said Mrs. Gray, in pure amazement; "why, Meta, I should as soon think of Dorothy in such a connection."

"Oh, mamma, there they go," cried Phylis, as, obedient to the bugle's sound, the first two companies advanced on a rapid trot to the centre of the field. The drill had begun, and as it went on, the girls grew more and more excited and interested, and when finally the order "charge" was given, and the black and sorrel horses vied with

each other in one long, dashing race down the grassy slopes, Phylis could contain herself no longer, and springing to her feet she clapped her hands and shouted "brava" with all the girlish enthusiasm of her sixteen years.

The clear, soft voice had a carrying quality, and as the Adjutant of the — trotted back to his position, he sent a quick glance in the direction whence it came and saw the slender figure in its dark blue gown standing up in the drag.

"I wonder who the little girl is?" said Lieutenant Frost to himself; then, as he got closer, "Jove! there's Marjorie on the back seat. I hope she'll wait until I can speak to her;" and he rode on to his post.

The drill was over, and the inmates of the carriages were preparing to drive to Headquarters to the breakfast given by the Commandant, but just as the drag was turned, a sorrel horse cantered past it, then the rider made a signal to the coachman and drew up beside them.

"Marjorie, at last!" and "Teddy, my dear, dear boy!" were two exclamations, and then the warm, hearty handshaking

followed. And then, sitting, cap in hand, in his saddle, Teddy looked up into the front seat and saw fixed on him two big violet eyes, grown dark and moist with enthusiasm, beneath straight brows which gave a look of force and intensity to the face, a clear, rose-tinted skin, a short upper lip, disclosing beautiful white teeth, and a nose with its slight upward tilt, perhaps the most characteristic feature of the face, except the rounded chin with its deep dimple. A slim brown hand went out toward him, and Phyllis said, "Guess who it is, Teddy?"

"Not Phylis?" exclaimed he, giving his horse a touch of the spur in his surprise, which caused the animal to rear for a second and then replace all four of his feet on the ground again. "Why, Marjorie, you never prepared me for this!"

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" groaned Mrs. Winship to herself; but she said aloud, "Present Lieutenant Frost to me, Marjorie, and let me tell him how glad I am to make his acquaintance."

"But you are all coming over to the Colonel's breakfast, are you not?" asked Teddy, shaking hands with her. "I 'll join you there in a few minutes."

"Then good-by, until you come over to see us," said Phylis.

"Good-by," said Teddy, looking mystified.

"Why, Teddy," said Mrs. Gray, "do you suppose that child goes to breakfasts? She 's only a school-girl, and came over for the parade with her friend Estelle. I beg your pardon, I did not introduce you to Miss Lawrence."

Teddy bowed to Estelle, and resumed, "Oh, I see, not 'out' yet, in fashionable life. But we are not society, we 're only an army post, and if you can't permit these school-girls to come in to breakfast, I see nothing for it but that I shall have to bring breakfast to them in the drag."

"Oh, that would be jolly," said Phylis; "may he, mamma?"

"There 's no hope for you, Marjorie," said Mrs. Winship, her eyes sparkling with fun. "I agree with Lieutenant Frost; the girls can't go hungry, so if you leave them in the drag you had better accept his offer."

Mrs. Gray resigned herself to the situation; there was no harm in the informal luncheon, and besides, Teddy was Teddy!

"Very well," she said, "we will meet you at the Colonel's. Drive on, Richards," and Teddy rode off in the opposite direction.

"Was ever anything so lovely?" said Phylis to Estelle; "is n't mamma just dear to let us have some lunch? I 'm famished; are n't you hungry?"

"Awfully!" said Estelle. "Oh, Phylis, I think Lieutenant Frost is perfectly *splendid!* don't you?"

"He rides well," said Phylis, turning her head to survey his back critically, "but those army saddles are too ugly for words."

"Phil, Phil, don't you think he 's good-looking?"

"Well," said Phylis coolly, "he has a fine figure."

"Oh, and such beautiful eyes and mustache, and such nice manners!"

"What do you take him for?" said Phylis, with a laugh. "He 's a gentleman; of course he has the manner of one."

"I declare, Phil," said Estelle, "you are the very most exasperating girl I ever saw."

"Oh, no, Estelle, only you 're always going on so about every man you meet."

"Can't you ever see for yourself?" said Estelle despairingly.

"When you give me a chance," said Phylis. "I can't take Teddy in all in a minute; do give me time to breathe, good child." From which remark it will be seen that Phylis was by no means averse to administering a gentle snub on occasions.

"How shall we arrange this, Marjorie?" said Mrs. Winship, while the girls were talking. "We can't both stay in the drag, of course?"

"Certainly not. You don't suppose I would leave them?"

"Then we had better go in and explain matters."

"You may leave that to Teddy," said Marjorie, smiling; "he has a way of doing things (at least he had some years ago, and I don't suppose he 's forgotten how); it will be a standing breakfast and easy enough to explain to the Colonel that the girls cannot well appear in due form. I will come out as soon as I have arranged it," and then the drag drew up in front of the Commandant's, and both ladies went into the house.

Phylis and Estelle remained in the drag talking and explaining all the new sights to

Dorothy, who was always made much of by everybody. Presently, there appeared in the door Teddy and a young officer, each bearing a plate of edibles, and a servant following with more. Teddy introduced his friend, Mr. Haven, and they both climbed up in the drag beside the girls. They had hardly finished the chicken salad, when Mrs. Gray reappeared; Teddy, jumping down, went to meet her.

"I find I cannot join you at present," she said; "the Colonel has provided a seat for me next the Secretary of War, and it would be ungracious in me to leave at once. So pray take care of the girls, Teddy; don't fill their heads with too much nonsense."

"No fear," said Teddy lightly, as he climbed up in the drag again; "you don't know what an old-sober-sides I have grown, Phylis."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Haven.

"You don't seem to be quite superannuated," said Phylis, "but I am taking you on hearsay, from papa and mamma. How old was I when you saw me last?"

"Let me recollect," said Teddy, regarding her with extreme gravity; "I think you must have been seven years old. I remem-

ber you wore blue kid shoes which you displayed to me with pride, and that you exhibited great interest in my epaulets, and demanded one of my brass buttons as a keepsake."

"I don't remember that," said Phylis, "but you gave me a candy chicken (which I devoured, after keeping it for two whole days) and a rag doll, which Jerry and I called Tommy. He was more like a pirate in appearance than anything else; he even had fierce whiskers and a black mustache carefully painted on his face, and he wore a scarlet knitted jacket and yellow trousers."

"I remember that rag doll," exclaimed Teddy. "I was in despair because I could n't find a respectable toy-shop (Washington did n't boast many such in those days), and I went into a queer little shop on Pennsylvania Avenue, where a buxom German lady informed me that the pirate was calculated to fill the juvenile bosom with joy and would prove indestructible even with the most violent usage."

"She was right," said Phylis, "he has even survived until to-day. Jerry and I adored Tommy; we always put him in all our plays and charades, and drew lots for

the privilege of his sharing our cribs. I would n't part with him for the world, though his right arm is minus a hand, and his left foot fell victim to one of the 'Heavenly Twins.'"

"'Heavenly Twins'?" demanded Teddy.

"That 's the cats," said Dorothy, who had been waiting her chance to join in the conversation.

"Cats? I thought they were children," said Teddy, laughing.

"These are n't," answered Dorothy, delighted to convey some information; "they 're big, big Angoras, and their real, true names are Mouchette and the Rajah."

"I shall be charmed to make their acquaintance," said Teddy. "So you 've kept the pirate, Phylis?"

"I believe she plays with him sometimes," said Dorothy teasingly; "do you, Phylis?"

"Why not?" said Phylis, with a blush and a smile; "you have to be amused when you come to see me, Dorothy."

"May I inquire," said Teddy, with an air of circumspection, "if you go to school?"

"Were you speaking to me?" said Phylis demurely.

"I have a governess," said Dorothy, somewhat mystified.

"Of course I go to school," said Phylis. "Why, Teddy, you *know* I'm not a young lady yet, even if I am as tall as mamma. Mrs. Paulding has a beautiful course planned out for me; if I do all she expects me to, I shall go in training for a modern Minerva."

Jack Haven and Estelle were making rapid strides toward acquaintance on the back seat, and he had nearly reached the point of asking whether he might call upon her when Teddy sung out, "I say, Jack, here come the ladies."

"Teddy," said Mrs. Gray, as she mounted the drag, "I have just been telling the Colonel that Rex and I consider that our house must be your home whenever you can be spared from the post, and by way of a beginning we expect you to dine to-night. Nobody but ourselves; it's Saturday, you know, and that is always Phylis's day of days, and we will go to the theatre afterwards."

"How lovely!" broke in Phylis; "you'll come, won't you, Teddy?"

"Come! Indeed I will, and thanks for your affectionate welcome, Marjorie. You and Aunt Debby are the only ones left who seem like home since Posy crossed the

water;" and the dark brown eyes grew a little sad, for his sister had always been Teddy's first thought since Grandma Frost died. "I've so much to hear and tell that you and the Senator must promise not to grow weary of me. Good-morning, Mrs. Winship, good-by, Phylis," and as the drag wheeled away, Phylis looked back and waved her hand toward where Teddy stood, lifting his cap, his handsome head well up, and the October sunshine playing in his curly hair.

CHAPTER IV.

PENELOPE.

The house stood at a little distance from the road which wound to westward of the small, but beautifully kept garden, and everything about it (indeed, for that matter, about the whole place) was as spick and span as New England hands could make it. The shutters were fresh with green paint, and the vines climbed up over the white piazza to the second-story windows, running races with the Michigan roses which grew over the front door, — a hardy rose, planted long ago by Miss Deborah Frost's father, and, as such, regarded by her as the chief object of her thoughtful care.

Miss Debby (as the mistress of the pretty homestead was familiarly known) had been for many years an absentee, and when she returned to the Massachusetts home under the shadow of Monadnock Mountain she was warmly and cordially welcomed by the friends of her girlhood, and, by reason of

her many and varied experiences "down South in war times," held as an ornament and credit to her native town. For had not Miss Debby been on a plantation in Virginia, not far from Winchester, when all the world's eyes were watching Phil Sheridan's campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah, and did she not have an almost personal share in one brave exploit that occurred there? After General Lee's surrender she had gone to live in Germantown, because her aunt, dear Grandma Frost, who owned the plantation in Virginia, also held property in Philadelphia, and the old lady preferred to end her days among the Quakers in the City of Brotherly Love.

Grandma Frost had lived until the great age of ninety-seven, and with Dora Lyndon married (to one of her hitherto despised "Yankees") and Teddy Frost at West Point, Miss Debby decided that Posy, Teddy's only sister, should be placed at school in Boston, and she would again open the old Massachusetts homestead, for which her heart had often yearned when down in Virginia. Truth to tell, Miss Debby had never quite reconciled herself to Southern ways; she was an ingrain New Englander,

and went South too late in life to change. Her steadfast, sturdy, wholesome soul had been fixed in the purpose to "bring up Reuben's children" in an orthodox and proper manner. Beside this, her other niece, Dora Lyndon, the only child of her sister, had been made an orphan, as well as Puck and Posy, and although Miss Debby accepted the charge with uncomplaining patience, her heart had never gone out to Dora as it did to the others. It was therefore the irony of Fate that some years after her establishing herself in New England a fourth orphan should be bequeathed her in the form of Dora's only child, a girl of eight. Miss Debby's inner soul did revolt somewhat, and one day shortly after the arrival of the child she confided her trials of spirit to the Reverend Abijah Bartlett, her pastor, as follows: —

"I am free to confess it does seem a little trying," said Miss Debby, sitting bolt upright in a wicker rocking-chair, which she never rocked; "I've had a good many years of bringing up other people's children, and have n't always found it encouraging. There was Teddy Frost and his sister Posy — I s'pose I ought to call her by her

name, Helen, now she 's Mrs. Courtney Adair, living in Berlin; but somehow Posy comes easier. Well, Teddy always was a good, sound, commonsense boy at bottom; I don't mean he had n't his pranks and his failings like most boys, but he certainly is a credit to his bringing up, if I *do* say it."

"Is this your nephew who is out on the frontier in the army?" asked the Reverend Abijah.

"Fighting Indians," said Miss Debby tersely; "yes, that 's mostly what he 's been about for some years. Well, then, there was Posy; she had her trials, and I 'm sure I had mine, over her beaux. You never saw anything to beat that girl. She was as pretty as a picture, and the way the young fellows would spring up whenever she walked out with me in Boston when I was there on holidays was a caution. I just trembled in my shoes till she went down to Washington to spend six months with Mrs. Gray (Senator Gray's wife, you know, Mr. Bartlett, who was Marjorie Clive), and, land sakes! if she did n't come home engaged to an Englishman, and an army officer at that. I had to give my consent, and I will say that, for a Britisher, Captain Adair was

about as nice a man as I ever ran across. And then, nothing would do but that the Grays must have her married from their house and give her a wedding. It was a trial to have Posy go abroad," and Miss Debby winked away a tear, and sat up more erect than ever.

"Where do the other trials come in?" said the Reverend Abijah, with a smile that betrayed his knowledge of Miss Debby, lifting one long lank leg over the other, as he shifted his chair nearer the vines.

"Just right here, this minute," said the much-enduring spinster. "At my age, after bringing up two girls and a boy for other people, who 've gone to rest leaving their blunders and failures for some one else to remedy, here 's another child landed at my door for me to experiment on. According to your ideas and mine, Mr. Bartlett, 't ain't right to be finding fault with the Almighty, but I do feel near being rebellious *this* time."

"I 'll allow it 's confusing," said the Reverend Abijah, genially, "but it appears to me, Miss Deborah, that you are far too modest; by your own admission, you have brought up the other three successfully, and

probably the Lord knows your special gift better than we do."

"Strikes me He 'd have made 'em mine to begin with if He 'd been so impressed with my gift," said Miss Debby dryly, with a gleam of humor in her eyes. "But that 's neither here nor there; the question is, how am I to commence on the newcomer? What kind of a teacher have they at the Normal School, in your estimation?"

"Well," said the pastor cautiously, "I *think* she 's reliable, at least the school-board seem pretty well suited. To be sure she 's young, but then they do send them out sooner than in my time. Yes, Miss Deborah, upon reflection I am convinced you might try sending the little girl there."

"I 'll try it for a while," said Miss Debby, "and then when she gets old enough, Farmington will be the place for her. I 've got to find out whom she takes after; if it 's her mother — well! I never did get along with Dora. She always was a sneak, and I hate 'em!"

"There now, there now," said the Reverend Abijah soothingly, as he rose from his chair and picked up his hat and gloves preparatory to a start, "don't anticipate

evil, Miss Deborah. 'Sufficient unto the day —'"

"Well, I always was a regular forecaster," said Miss Debby; "and I guess I 'm too old now to be made over on any other pattern. But it 's good of you to take so much interest, Mr. Bartlett, and I should esteem it a favor if you 'll continue to advise me. Where 's your umbrella? Oh, I guess I put it in the sitting-room," and she whisked inside the door, returning with the good man's neatly folded parachute, which he tucked carefully under his arm as he proceeded down the well-kept gravel walk to the gate.

Miss Debby set the rocking-chairs back in their accustomed places on the piazza and was about to go indoors to see if supper was ready, when a sound of half-suppressed sobs, not far distant, met her ear.

"Bless my soul, where is that child?" she ejaculated. "I declare if she is n't under the piazza. How in the world did you ever get there?" as a small, tousled figure crept up the steps and came toward her; "was n't there room enough in the place that you had to hide there?"

"I did n't hide," said the child stub-

bornly; "the kitty went under the piazza an' I went after her, an' she scratched me, an' I did n't dare come out till the gentleman went away, 'cause I 'm so dirty."

"Well, you are rather grimy," said Miss Debby, surveying her, and becoming suddenly aware that the face before her was extremely beautiful, both in contour and coloring. "Run along in the house and ask Hannah to wash your face and hands before supper."

"I sha'n't," said the child, "and I don't want any supper — any of your supper, I mean."

"Good land!" ejaculated Miss Debby, in amazement; "what in the world are you talking about?"

"You," said the child briefly.

"Penelope Leigh, have you taken leave of your senses? What 's come over the child?"

"I won't eat your supper," cried Penelope passionately; "I 'll starve first. You told that man that my mother was a sneak — yes, you did! I heard you with my own ears, and you had no right to say so — no right!"

Miss Debby sat down in her rocking-

chair and looked the child squarely in the face for a second. "Penelope," said she slowly, "I apologize. Whether I had any right to make that remark about your mother is another matter; I sha'n't dwell on that point. But I certainly should not have said it had I known you were within hearing. Perhaps you 'll remark that I had no business to say it even behind your back; that 's neither here nor there. For the present I apologize."

"Thank you," said Penelope gravely.

Miss Debby felt a twitching of the muscles of her mouth, but she only said, —

"There, now, run along and find Hannah, and ask her to give you a piece of sponge cake when your face is clean. And don't go under the piazza again;" and then, as Penelope vanished inside, Miss Debby said to herself with a queer smile, —

"Well, I never! she 's got more courage in her little finger than Dora had in her whole body. Abijah Bartlett, I told you I was a forecaster; guess this one will prove a harder nut to crack than most."

Life went on quietly and regularly in the Massachusetts home for some years. Penelope "kept things lively," as Miss Debby

expressed it, and although the child and the spinster had, at bottom, a genuine respect for each other, somehow they never quite reached the entire and perfect confidence which alone could make their domestic relations thoroughly agreeable. There was always a jar somewhere; smoothed over, but still there. Posy, who had loved Aunt Debby with her whole warm heart, and Teddy, whose sturdy honest nature always struck a responsive chord in her, she both loved and respected; but Dora's child was a problem against whom she unconsciously hardened herself. And, equally, against the injustice which she felt, but could not define, Penelope always revolted in secret. Some day the smouldering fire might kindle and produce a flame which would startle Miss Debby.

Miss Debby was in the front kitchen one morning stringing apples, after the old New England fashion, which, when dried, would form the basis of many delicious pies for winter consumption, and Penelope had gone over into the town to get last night's letters and papers; for they were just outside the postman's rounds, and although in fine weather he sometimes stretched a point and delivered

them at the door of the homestead, it was a trifle surer to go in person, especially if letters were expected.

"Hannah," said Miss Debby, addressing her handmaid, "it appears to me that we 've got more apples this year than we had last."

"Well, yes, Miss Debby, I calculate we have," said Hannah; "but 't ain't too many if you 're goin' to send some to the parsonage, an' to old Mis' Turner, an' the Widder Foster, an' the orphans' home" —

"Never mind," said Miss Debby, interrupting; "there 's mor' 'an enough for all of 'em. Besides, I 'm thinking perhaps we won't need quite so many ourselves this year."

"Be you goin' off somewheres?" said Hannah, who always liked and expected to be told of her mistress's plans beforehand.

"Well," said Miss Debby, with the air of reserve which she occasionally adopted when ready to be questioned, "I may; my mind ain't altogether made up. But I do think of sending Penelope away to school."

"Laws!" ejaculated Hannah, and then, prudently, pursed up her mouth and waited for further information.

"Yes," said Miss Debby. "And what 's more, I 'm thinking of sending her to Washington."

"To Washington, D. C.?" said Hannah, opening her eyes wide at this surprising intelligence. "Why, Miss Debby, you 've always been so satisfied with Farmington."

"I know I have; but, Hannah, I 've been consulting Mrs. Gray, and she highly recommends a school which her daughter Phylis has attended ever since she was eight years old, and I am mighty pleased with the accounts I get, so I 've most concluded to try it. Hush, here comes Penelope," and Hannah went, obedient to the bell, to open the door.

Into the room there glided a very beautiful girl. There was no mere prettiness about Penelope Leigh; it was absolute beauty of feature and coloring, such as is rarely found even in our favored country. The dark, sombre eyes, the clear, white skin, with hardly a tinge of color, save in moments of great excitement, and the thick, waving auburn hair above an almost classic brow, made up a face which arrested attention not only from its beauty, but from its singular look of repression, a strange factor in a girl

of seventeen. Perhaps it was this which repelled Aunt Debby, for as the girl entered and came toward her, she said to herself, "Handsome is that handsome does; what in the world is she out of sorts about now?"

"Here are the letters, Aunt Debby," said Penelope, in a low, rather monotonous voice, quite in keeping with her face. "I waited for the New York paper, and then Mr. Bartlett stopped me and said he would drive me over if I did n't mind waiting at the laundry for a minute while he got his clean linen."

"You don't mean to say that Abijah Bartlett gets his shirts and collars done at that new-fangled laundry on Prospect Street — well! I don't believe they 're downright clean when they come back, and I shall just tell him so, first time I see him. Two, three letters, and one from Marjorie Gray!" and Miss Debby pounced on her mail, and pulling off her apron, marched into the sitting-room to read it.

"Did n't you get none?" said Hannah to Penelope, as the girl sat down and pulled off her gloves.

"Yes, one from Farmington," said Penelope briefly. "I 'm not the kind to either

get or write letters, Hannah," and she walked into the hall on her way upstairs.

"Penelope," came Miss Debby's call, as the girl set her foot on the first step. She turned back and entered the sitting-room.

"Sit down, child," said the spinster. "Here 's a letter from Mrs. Gray, and as it concerns you, I 'd better tell you at once. How would you like to go to Washington for a year's schooling instead of Farmington?"

"I — to Washington?" a faint glow came into Penelope's face. "Why, Aunt Debby, do you mean it?"

"Of course I do," said Aunt Debby briskly, pleased at the unusual show of interest, for Penelope's absolute indifference, whether real or artificial, was a thorn in her side always. "I didn't let you know until I had inquired into it, because there 's no use in raising hopes, and I kind of thought Farmington was n't quite congenial last year, so I 've made arrangements to send you to Mrs. Paulding as a boarder, and Mrs. Gray writes me that — here, I 'll read it," and she adjusted her glasses and began:—

"'The terms are as you wished, dear Aunt Debby, and I feel quite sure that you could

nowhere find a school so thoroughly desirable. Rex and I intend to keep Phylis there, and there never was a woman more beloved by her scholars than Mrs. Paulding. Penelope ought to be very happy with her, and of course you know we shall expect her to spend every Sunday with us, as a little change from school routine. Phylis will be delighted to have a weekly visitor of this kind, and it gives me more pleasure than I can tell you to have an opportunity of returning some of your many acts of love and kindness to me' " — here Miss Debby pulled up abruptly. "Oh! that 's all foolishness; never was such a person for recollecting small things as Marjorie, eh, Penelope?"

"Well, as I don't know Mrs. Gray," began Penelope —

"To be sure! what am I thinking of. Well, it 's settled, and you 're to go next week."

Penelope drew a long breath; here was a change, indeed. But it was characteristic of the girl that she showed none of the excitement she could not help feeling.

"Am I going alone?" she said slowly.

"Bless the child! no, I 'm going with you. It 's some years now since I saw that part of

the country. My! how it must have changed since war times, when Grandma Frost and I came through from Virginia to take the children North. I shall only stay a few days, just to get you settled and see Marjorie and Captain — I beg his pardon — Senator Gray, and Phylis, whom I've never seen since she was a baby at Craignest. Yes, we 'll have plenty to do packing up, and I can get a few new clothes for you in Washington, no doubt. They do have shops there now, I 'm told."

"Aunt Debby," said Penelope, standing up and putting her hand on the angular elbow next her, "I want to tell you that I am *very* glad to go, and — and — it was very good of you to find out that Farmington was uncongenial to me; thank you," and a half-reluctant kiss fell on Miss Debby's cheek, as the door closed on the fleeing figure.

"Land's sakes!" said Miss Debby, recovering herself from the surprise of this unusual demonstration, "I do believe she 's got some feeling stowed away after all. But I always held to it that she 's a hard nut to crack, as Abijah Bartlett knows;" and Miss Debby walked out of the room and closed the door.

CHAPTER V.

TEDDY'S DILEMMA.

THE Pennsylvania Station at Sixth Street was crowded to its utmost with the usual rush of Northern and Southern travel, as the Congressional Limited puffed slowly in and discharged a new stream of weary passengers. At the eastern gate stood Mrs. Gray and Phylis, but the crowd had somewhat thinned when the latter exclaimed, —

"Oh, do look, mamma, I am certain that must be Aunt Debby," and about halfway down the platform a tall, angular form was seen waving a trenchant umbrella at a baggage agent who was pursuing her, pencil and pad in hand.

"Aunt Debby, dear, dear Aunt Debby," cried Mrs. Gray, as the well-known face smiled into hers, and she was clasped in Aunt Debby's arms. "It 's like being Marjorie Clive again to see you; and this is my Phylis, and oh, Penelope, dear, I am very glad to welcome you."

"Bless me, she 's her father all over," ejaculated Aunt Debby, standing still and surveying Phylis critically; "not a bit like you, Marjorie. Hope you 've inherited some of your mother's pluck, child; I always said *she* was one of the bravest girls I ever knew."

"Ah, Aunt Debby, my bravery was only for one occasion, I am afraid," said Mrs. Gray; "and then think who was at the other end of my journey!"

"Papa was," said Phylis, slipping her hand in Penelope's arm and possessing herself of a traveling-bag. "I 've had several versions of that story, Aunt Debby, but I should love to hear yours. This is the way to the carriage; I 'll take care of Penelope," and the two girls made their way through the crowd in the waiting-room and emerged on the sidewalk, where the carriage was drawn up at the curbstone.

"I declare to mercy," said Aunt Debby, as she settled herself comfortably on the back seat, and they were rolling up Pennsylvania Avenue, "the years seem to stand still with you, Marjorie. I don't see but you look just about the same as ever, not a day older; the only thing that does n't seem quite right is this great tall girl."

"You should see my great tall boy," said Marjorie playfully. "Gerald is nearly his father's height, six feet, and if he keeps on I don't know how I shall support the position. I am afraid you 've had a most tiresome and fatiguing day, Aunt Debby; it 's a long journey from New England."

Penelope during the ride up from the station had been examining Phylis from head to foot, in the glimpses which the electric lights afforded, and Phylis, following the example, was studying the face beside her, when suddenly their eyes met and Phylis laughed outright.

"Don't be shy, Penelope," she said in her frank, irresistible fashion; "we girls are n't given much to formalities here, and it won't take long for you and me to get acquainted. And you can't begin to know how glad I am you 've come; you see I have no one but Jerry, and since he went to Yale I 've been absolutely pining for a 'running mate' in all my fun."

Penelope felt a small lump gather in her throat; her cold, indifferent demeanor had always held the school-girls at Farmington at arm's length, but there was a tone in Phylis's charming voice which went to her

heart as nothing had ever done and conquered her on the spot.

"Oh, thank you!" It was her usual stiff little formula, but Phylis's keen eyes caught sight of the unsteady lips, and with quick sympathy divined the unspoken gratitude.

"Here we are," she said cheerfully, as the carriage drew up at her own door and her father's merry voice, like an echo of her own, was heard saying, "At last, dear Aunt Debby! Why, you are an hour behind time, and Teddy and I were at the point of going down to see what had become of my family." But Aunt Debby was in Teddy's arms, and for once she was speechless.

Penelope's endeavor to encase herself in her mantle of proud reserve was but partially successful when met on the one hand by Senator Gray and on the other by Teddy. The warmth of the former, whose cordial greeting she was quite unprepared for, and Teddy's "Halloo, Penelope! how you 've grown; Aunt Debby, you 'll never be able to make me believe you can keep this girl at school," was so full of life and fun that Penelope's cheeks flushed, her great eyes smiled, and she looked so entirely unlike

herself that Aunt Debby's soul quaked within her and she half doubted the wisdom of her new proceeding.

"Oh, girls!" cried Phylis, early the next morning, rushing into the school-room ten minutes before the hour, and divesting herself of her wraps with her usual energy; "you can't think what I've got to tell you. There's a new girl coming — at least she has come as far as my house already, but what I mean is, she's coming here as a boarder for her last year, and I tell you she's a 'stunner' as Jerry would say."

"Oh!" chorused the half dozen girls present; "what's her name?"

"Penelope Leigh; isn't that pretty of itself — but not one half so pretty as she. She has such eyes — and hair — and skin! — just you wait and see."

"Is it the girl I heard my mamma say was 'a great responsibility'?" demanded Dorothy Winship, sidling up to Phylis.

"Yes, my mosquito," quoth Phylis, "and you must be very, very nice to her, do you hear, and not play any of your neat little pranks on a newcomer who does n't know what a dear you are for all your stings;" and the girls laughed again, for Dorothy's

nickname was the outcome of many a queer episode which they had all enjoyed and made merry over.

"Is she stopping with you, Phil?" asked Cora.

"Only for a few days; then she comes as a boarder here, but Mrs. Paulding will let her come to us over Sundays and for all the holidays. You see, girls, Penelope is an orphan, and lives up in New England with Miss Deborah Frost (oh, Aunt Debby's a dear, I wish you could see her and hear her talk), and, somehow, I think at Farmington where she 's been at school the girls were rather horrid to her. Mind, she has n't said so, but I made it out from two or three things she did say. And I want you," — looking around the circle with most persuasive eyes, — "I want you all to be just as nice as ever you can to Penelope; will you?"

"Oh, yes," promised the girls, and as the school-bell rang at that moment they all trooped upstairs, eager to see the newcomer to their ranks.

As it happened, however, Mrs. Gray and Aunt Debby decided that Penelope should have a week's vacation before commencing

school, and Phylis was delighted at the opportunity to take her all over Washington, sightseeing. In this, Aunt Debby was as enthusiastic as Phylis could possibly desire, far more so than Penelope, for whom the various expeditions were ostensibly planned. Teddy would appear at the Grays' every afternoon about three o'clock, and then the three would sit down in the library and arrange what should be done next day, with due regard to Phylis, for her school-hours were never invaded, and it took a great deal of planning to get to public buildings before they closed at four.

The Treasury and the Hall of Statuary in the Capitol pleased Aunt Debby most; especially the latter, where she rejoiced in the statue of Ethan Allen (one of her forbears), whom she greatly admired.

"There was a *man!*" she declared, planting her umbrella firmly on the stone floor. "He meant what he said, and he generally did it, too."

"Like Phylis," whispered Teddy mischievously. But Aunt Debby heard him.

"It 's a quality she has no claim to be ashamed of, Teddy Frost; 't ain't given to many people in this world to know what

they actually *do* want, I can tell you. It saves lots of trouble, and of eating your own words and of backing down. I always did abominate crab-like folks, and I'm thankful Phylis don't belong to that species." Whereat both Teddy and Phylis went off into a peal of laughter, and Penelope's bewildered stare brought the old story of Phylis at three years old upon her head.

Teddy came flying up the stairs of his quarters one day, in a great hurry to start for the City, as he had promised to take Phylis out on horseback, and having been detained by the Colonel in the office where they were making ready for pay-day, he was afraid the ambulance which left Fort Meyer at half past two would go off without him. He changed his coat and boots rapidly, when a pile of letters caught his eye, evidently left by the orderly when the mail came in. Teddy stopped, picked them up, and then sang out to Jack Haven, who occupied the rooms next his, —

"I say, Jack, here are three letters for you got by mistake into my mail. By Jove! two from Fort Russell, — one for you and one for me."

"Hand over," said Jack, sauntering in,

pipe in hand. "Oh, that 's from old Burroughs; now we 'll have all the regimental news. Who 's yours from, Teddy? I say, old man, what 's up?" for Teddy, with an exclamation of dismay, had dropped into the nearest chair and was regarding his open letter with evident consternation.

"Here 's a to-do, Jack; this is from the little — well, I suppose I have n't any business to tell, but really you helped me out of that deuce of an awkward hole I was in the day before we left the Fort."

"You don't mean that girl 's on the hunt still?" demanded Jack, with lively curiosity. "Oh, Teddy, Teddy!"

"Hanged if I can help it," said Teddy, with a stamp of impatience. "Give you my word, Jack, I 've never written her a line."

"Well, then, what 's up now? You 're not under bonds to answer that epistle, are you?"

"No, thank Heaven; but just listen to this," and Teddy read, with various breaks, as follows: —

"'I am off on Monday, and I am so happy to leave a place where' — (um — um, bother her nonsense!), 'and which I can never forget' — (oh, where *is* the end of this sentence?)

'for we go straight to Chicago, where I leave Aunt Emily; and now I have *such* a piece of news for you. Guess, if you can — but you can't. I am coming to Fort Meyer to spend six months with my other aunt, Mrs. Redmond'" —

"Oh, Lord, Teddy! not the Major's wife?" interpolated Jack.

Teddy nodded. "That same," he said briefly; "'and as I hear that you are stationed there I send my letter to tell you before you can hear it from the Redmonds.'"

"Considerate of her!" shouted Jack. "Great Scott, this is too much, Teddy; your sins are beginning to find you out; sorry for you, my boy."

"Shut up," said Teddy, ramming the letter in its envelope, and eyeing it ruefully as he tossed it into a drawer; "be serious, Jack, for it's no joke for me. You recollect the scene on the piazza that night at Russell?"

"You bet I do; little girl in tears, going to faint, you in a blue fright, and I passing by, caught on, and stayed until she thought better of it."

"Now, Jack, listen to me," said Teddy, so seriously that Haven knew he was in earnest, and having great regard for his

senior officer, became grave on the instant; "you know I 'm not averse to a jolly flirtation when a pretty girl is willing, but I don't believe you ever saw me go to work deliberately to win a girl's heart when I did n't care a pin for her. I 've too much love and reverence for a real woman to do that, and I don't think I 've developed into a cad yet. But this affair makes me confoundedly uneasy. You know what a curious sort Miss Duncan is; a hysterical, emotional creature," —

"Half-cracked, some of us thought," muttered Jack under his breath.

"And I presume she thought much more of my little attentions than they were worth, certainly than I did. I swear to you in all sincerity, that I *never* uttered a word of love to her in all our acquaintance, which was short, as you know. I thought she was only filling up her idle hours as I was mine, and — well! I had a curious letter from her that morning I left Russell, and another followed me to Chicago, and now — oh, Jack, the very deuce will be in it if she comes here, and under chaperonage of the Redmonds."

"Don't look so disconsolate; brace up,

Teddy, the lovely Miss Duncan may manage to console herself with some other fellow. Washington is a fine campaigning ground, you know, for young ladies in search of an affinity."

"That 's a fact," said Teddy, looking up gratefully; "what a conceited ass I was not to think of it before. Jove! that confounded ambulance will be off without me; just sing out of the window and stop it, there 's a good fellow," and with a rattle and a bang Teddy was off down the staircase, once again his light-hearted self.

"Well," pondered Jack Haven, as he relighted his forgotten pipe, and proceeded to open his own letters, "I shall certainly have to look after old Teddy. Perhaps I might have a 'fly' with the lady myself, just to keep my hand in. To think of Anita Duncan turning up here, and with Mrs. Redmond, too! I wonder what the Major ever did that he should be punished for his sins by having to become answerable for bringing that woman into the army. I 've never been on a post with her before, and I trust I shall not run across her often again. Well, well, we shall see," and Jack walked off to his room, chuckling over the situation. It is so

much easier to be amused over one's friends' dilemmas than one's own.

Teddy made quick time across the bridge, and when he reached the Grays' door found his orderly holding his horse, and Phylis's groom just coming around the corner with the Kaiser. Phylis was in the library with Penelope, who waited before going upstairs to see the pair start on their ride.

Phylis never looked to more advantage than in her saddle, and as Teddy swung her up, he told her so, with emphasis. Phylis, who accepted his compliment as if it had been Gerald's, smiled and thanked him.

"You know grandpa gave me Kaiser on my last birthday, Teddy, because he was so pleased with my winning a lady's race that we had at Craignest last summer," said she, as they rode up Sixteenth Street. "There were three girls in the house, friends of mamma's, from New York, and we made up five others from the country seats near us. I was n't to have ridden at all, but Miss Jeffray was ill, and as grandpa had offered a prize the race had to be run, so, by great good luck, I got my chance. I rode Miss Jeffray's horse, and as I had never put him at his speed but once before I rode in

the race, it was sheer luck that I won, after all."

"How about the jump over the gate?" asked Teddy slyly.

"Oh, who told you about that — papa?" Teddy nodded. "You see the excitement of the race just took hold of me; I *had* to win, if I got thrown, or broke my arm" —

"Or your neck," interrupted her hearer.

"Yes, or my neck. Oh! it was splendid. To feel that gray horse which Clara Norris rode come closer, closer, almost to my shoulder, and then when I saw that the space was too narrow for all the horses to jump the hedge, I just made as quick as lightning for the gate — and we were over and at the winning-post before I knew it."

"You have the real stuff to win in you," said Teddy, as Phylis threw back her head, and her color rose with the recollection; "I 've ridden races too, and I'm afraid I sympathize only too keenly. It 's a sort of excitement not good for either of us."

"You 're right," said Phylis mournfully, "for that is precisely what papa said. And dear little mamma was so excited that she cried, and I felt like beating myself for a brute, to worry her like that!"

"Your mother ought not to complain,"

said Teddy; "she took an exciting race once down in Virginia when she rode into Early's Camp."

"Ah, but that was to save papa's life; mine was only to win a gold bracelet. Teddy, Teddy, what must it have been to live in war-times!"

"Thank God you know nothing about it," said Teddy. "I was only a scrap of a boy eight years old, but the recollection is firmly implanted on my mind."

"And yet you went to West Point and made the army your profession?"

"Do you know why? Because of my intense admiration for your father."

"You had a good model," said Phylis, whose father was her ideal. Teddy smiled at her voice of conviction.

"And I love my profession," he went on. "Even on the frontier, fighting Indians, or, worse luck, at some little one-company post, I have never yet regretted the choice I made."

"I wish I was a man," said Phylis, with a sigh.

"For Heaven's sake, don't!"

"I always did wish I was a boy."

"Be content," said Teddy; "you women are the real heroes, after all."

CHAPTER VI.

REDMOND, ET AL.

When the — Cavalry was ordered to Fort Meyer its major, who had been for several years on special duty, was also sent East to join them, and the Colonel, on his arrival, found the Redmonds nicely ensconced in quarters. Of course, until the Commandant's arrival Major Redmond had the choice of houses on the post, and as there was a fixed headquarters (a fine large house, at the corner, upon the hill) he thought it best to select one nearer the gate, upon the same row. But that did not suit Mrs. Redmond, and as the Major had long ago found out that she could assert herself with great fluency, he found it necessary to yield the point when she insisted upon having the house next door to the Commandant's, which was, perhaps, rather more than they were entitled to, as they had no family.

This house, which was familiarly known

as "No. 17," had on its left hand the bachelor quarters, which, although there were no communicating doors, had an upper piazza which extended across both houses in the rear, and the garden, on the right side, stood between No. 17 and the Commandant's. Each house had its pretty dooryard in front, and these were filled with shade trees and flowers, the latter, of course, depending upon the taste and horticultural fancies of their owners.

The Colonel, being a widower, had, on coming East, made arrangements that his daughter, Mrs. Goddard, the wife of a navy officer, should preside over his home until her husband, now in the Mediterranean Squadron, should return to shore duty. When he found that the Redmonds were settled as such close neighbors, he pulled his long mustache (as he was given to doing in moments of perplexity) and wished devoutly that Fortune had been more kind to him. However, on reflection, he decided to say nothing, for, to quote his own words, as he held a few minutes' conversation with himself: "Redmond's as fine a fellow as there is in the service, and if Minna can't manage to get the whip-hand of Mrs. — well! it

will be the first time she ever backed down, that 's all!"

Major Redmond had served very gallantly during the War of the Rebellion, and at its close had been given a captaincy in the — Cavalry. He was an intimate friend of Reginald Gray, and a cousin of Judge Winship; therefore when he was ordered to Fort Meyer there was great rejoicing on the part of both Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Winship, who had known and liked him well. Mrs. Redmond was an utter stranger to the Grays, but Meta, on a trip West, had once met her, and found her, to put it mildly, anything but congenial.

That Mrs. Redmond was a good woman, according to her lights, could not, perhaps, be denied, but the term "good" depends chiefly upon one's point of view. From her standard it meant strict attention to church duties, a certain amount of Biblical lore daily, an ardent desire to advise, manage, and control every one within her reach, and to keep a close and careful watch upon her neighbors. Her curiosity was something almost abnormal; and unless it was gratified the Major knew that he must suffer; therefore his chief endeavor was never to

excite it. To be sure, it is easier to avoid a pitfall when one knows of its existence, but it requires patience and shrewdness to erect a wire fence around it.

Redmond himself was a most elegant and striking-looking man. Fully six feet, with keen, clever face, and frank, kindly eyes, genial manner, and a thorough soldier, devoted to his profession, he was both popular and beloved in the service, as well as in his own regiment. There never was a man who had stronger friends, and the proof of this was that they clung to him despite the very evident jealousy which his wife usually exhibited toward them.

Mrs. Redmond's personal appearance was much against her; perhaps if nature had been more kind to her in the matter of beauty her mental make-up would have been less hard and narrow. Her high cheek-bones and thin, cold lips were surmounted by pale blue eyes and a mere reminiscence of light eyebrows, while her figure was spare and angular, and there was an entire lack of grace or ease in her movements. But perhaps her most annoying characteristic was her voice, which was much in evidence, as she seldom ceased talking.

Pitched upon a high, nasal key, which apparently no early training had corrected, her pronunciation was a curious cross between a Yankee twang and a Western drawl, which made it altogether unique. Once heard, one could never quite forget Mrs. Redmond's voice.

That they had no children was at one time a silent, deep-seated grief to Major Redmond. But as years went on and his sense of irritation and worry in daily life calmed down into serene patience, rarely ruffled, he came at last to feel that "whatever is, is right!" and, brave fellow that he was, made no sign.

The youngsters in the regiment, at every post where the Redmonds had been stationed, could not endure Mrs. Redmond. She never seemed able to refrain from meddling; in fact her own impression was that she had been sent into the world by the Almighty with a distinct purpose, namely, to straighten people out on her pattern. That there might be other lines of travel heavenward never occurred to her; she was honestly convinced hers was the sole and only path. The wives of the other officers generally gave her wide swath; she was

not a quarrelsome woman, and her lack of perception and tact prevented her from realizing that their concessions to her peculiarities were chiefly the result of good-breeding, not conviction. Some of the younger women made fun of her, often so openly as to cause the Major to wince with sensitive pain; but Mrs. Redmond never saw the jokes, as she totally lacked a sense of humor, and dismissed them from her mind as "frivolous," remaining perfectly satisfied with herself and her methods.

Anita Duncan was the child of Mrs. Redmond's eldest sister; her mother had died in her early childhood, and as her father had married again, the care of Anita was assumed jointly by her aunts. Both of them having married army officers, Anita's life had been passed chiefly at boarding-schools in different parts of the country, and her first home, after leaving school at the age of nineteen, was at Fort Clark, in Texas, and later, at Fort Russell. She had not been at all with Mrs. Redmond, and as they had not met since Anita was an awkward girl of twelve, her aunt was greatly excited by the prospect of her niece's advent. The Major, kind and generous as ever, had contributed

a new set of pretty white furniture for Anita's room, and Mrs. Redmond had arranged everything else to her own satisfaction. Therefore, when the Major finally received the telegram saying that the guest would reach Washington late in the evening, Mrs. Redmond decided that she would remain at home and have supper ready instead of going to town to meet her.

Anita arrived, and was so utterly spent with the long journey that her aunt did not have much opportunity for conversation that night, but the next morning, after taking her breakfast in bed (a concession to her fatigue only) she arrayed herself in a pale blue wrapper and appeared in the parlor about twelve o'clock.

"Oh, there you are," said Mrs. Redmond, appearing from a trip into her kitchen; "I did not have you called because you looked so very tired last night. I hope you slept well."

"Beautifully," answered Anita, settling herself among the pillows on the sofa and stretching out two tiny red slippers toward the grate fire. "It was the most dreadful journey you can imagine, and I 'm so glad to get to its end, Aunt Rhoda."

"Well, we 're glad to have you," said Mrs. Redmond hospitably. "How did you leave Emily and the children?"

"Aunt Emily was well, and the children, as usual, under everybody's feet. I am so glad there are none of the species here," and Anita heaved a sigh of contentment. She was the soul of luxury and abominated exertion of any sort. "And oh, Aunt Rhoda, what a love of a post this is! So much nicer than those horrid forts out West."

"I have n't altogether made up my mind about the post," said Mrs. Redmond. "These are pretty good quarters, though I should n't have had this house if I had n't stuck to it pretty firmly. The Major took one nearer the gate; I just made up my mind that we ought to have this, and I got it."

Anita surveyed her aunt with curious eye for a moment; she was, so to speak, taking her measure, and Anita possessed a fair share of discernment. "You 're right, Aunt Rhoda," said she calmly; "people are so apt to place you at your own valuation. If you go and put yourself in a corner, the world will leave you there; take up your position in the centre of the room under the chandelier, and every one, in nine cases out of ten, will give way to you."

Mrs. Redmond caught herself wondering how Anita had acquired so much knowledge of the world, but she ignored the remark. She never, even to herself, admitted that any human being had more perspicuity than had been allotted to her own share.

"The bachelor quarters are on this side," she said, waving her hand in that direction; "we have only two unmarried officers at present, Lieutenants Frost and Haven. I know Jack Haven, for he was six months at Fort Clark, but the senior Lieutenant I 've only just met."

"I know Teddy Frost," said her niece quietly, but with heightened color.

"You do? He never mentioned it; where in the world did you meet him?"

"At Fort Russell, of course," said Anita.

"I had forgotten; well, what kind of a fellow is he?" demanded her aunt.

"You must n't ask me, Aunt Rhoda," said Anita, blushing and smiling, "because I know him very, *very* well, and of course I think him charming."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Redmond It was a very big round O, and Anita congratulated herself that she had accomplished the very result she desired.

"I haven't heard very much of him," resumed Mrs. Redmond, "except that he is very well off, quite rich, in fact, as his parents died when he was young, and his property accumulated greatly while he was a minor. Mrs. Ferguson was talking about him the other evening. She seems to know him quite well. He's some kin to the Grays (perhaps I'm mistaken as to the kinship; I reckon she did say great friends), and he's over in Washington most of the time when he can be spared from the post. He's getting to be a great society man, too; Mrs. Ferguson said he had more invitations to dinner than he could possibly accept, and the Major laughed and said he was glad 'Teddy' was having his innings; he'd been so long outside the pale of civilization. Major Redmond has known Frost for some years, I believe."

"Have you been out in Washington society at all?" asked Anita, anxious to get her bearings at once.

"Not so very much," said her aunt. "The Winships have just begun their receptions, and Meta said she'd be glad to have you come and pour tea for her next Monday. You know the wives of the

Judges have that day of the week, and I think it will be a very pleasant thing for you to be introduced by Mrs. Winship."

"Is n't she some sort of a connection of ours?" said Anita.

"Yes; it 's distant, though; Judge Winship's father and my grandmother were cousins; it 's on his side of the family. Meta was a Livingston of the New York family, and is as proud and stand-off as those old New Yorkers are given to being." Here Anita shot a sidelong glance at the speaker, which Mrs. Redmond was not quick enough to catch. "I saw Meta out at Omaha two years ago," pursued her aunt, "and it was just as much as she could do to get along out there. She did n't like the West and she did n't admire Western folks; dear me! what a fuss some of the people did make over her, and she went right along with that airy sort of a manner (which some people think attractive, but I don't) and had her own way in Omaha, I just tell you."

Anita was seized with an ardent desire to make Mrs. Winship's acquaintance. She had read about the elegant New York and Washington women and longed to know them.

"Then there are the Grays," Mrs. Redmond went on. "Mrs. Gray is a great favorite, though how in the world she ever can take proper care of her house and her husband, not to mention that girl of hers, and go out all day and all night, as she does, is beyond me."

"Who are the Grays?" demanded Anita.

"Why, he 's the Senator from New York, you know, and they are very wealthy and live in great style here. The Major and he were cronies in war times, and have always kept up a friendship."

"Did you say there was a Miss Gray?" asked Anita.

"Dear me, no! There 's an only daughter, Phylis, a half-grown girl whom the Major has a great fancy for. She rides, and shoots, and does amateur photography, and the Major finds her vastly amusing."

"You don't?" questioned Anita, with a gleam of fun flickering her eyelids.

"Not I! Mrs. Gray has no more idea how to bring up a child — why, Phylis just speaks up and gives her opinions as if they were entitled to consideration," and Mrs. Redmond's voice rose on its most rasping key, as Major Redmond entered the door.

"Who is entitled to consideration, my dear?" he asked pleasantly.

"I was talking about Phylis Gray," said his wife, closing her lips with a peculiar snap with which the Major was only too familiar.

"Oh, my little friend, Phylis; there 's a genuine girl for you, Anita," said the Major; "clever, blithe, merry; full of good common sense, and yet with the quickest sensibilities; her father all over, but with a touch now and then of her most charming, womanly mother. I don't know a better specimen of thoroughly good bringing up and home-training."

"Well, I don't agree with you," said Mrs. Redmond obstinately.

"Here is the noon mail," said the Major, wisely dropping the subject, "and two or three invitations apparently among it."

"This is from Mrs. Winship," said his wife, opening a note. "She invites us and Anita to dine, informally, on Tuesday. Anita, I hope you 've got some gowns for such occasions."

"Oh, yes," said the girl easily, "plenty of them, Aunt Rhoda."

"You will enjoy Washington," said the Major kindly, as he surveyed the pretty

little blonde, who flashed a coquettish glance at him. "I asked our two bachelors to come in this evening and call on you, but Frost had an engagement at the Grays, and Jack Haven was going to the theatre. But I booked them both for to-morrow."

"Thank you," said Anita sweetly, "I should like to see Teddy Frost." The Major looked up with some surprise, and his wife added, "You see Anita knows Frost *very* well."

"Oh!" said the Major, but as lunch was announced at that moment, he did not pursue the inquiry further.

That night, however, as she was taking down her hair, Mrs. Redmond walked into her husband's dressing-room.

"What do you think of her?" she demanded abruptly.

"Think of whom?" said the Major, startled from the doze which he was indulging in his favorite armchair.

"Why, Anita Duncan, of course."

"She is extremely pretty and dainty My dear, why are you asking me so anxiously for my opinion?"

"Well," said Mrs. Redmond uneasily, "I was thinking of the story about her

grandfather, and of her father, whom she closely resembles; she has his coloring and the same half-sleepy eyes. You are aware there is cause for anxiety, Redmond."

"I had forgotten," said the Major; "but I think you are borrowing trouble, Rhoda. I would n't begin by worrying, if I were you, and above all, never speak to the poor girl on the subject."

"What do you take me for?" said his amiable spouse. "If there 's one thing I flatter myself I can do, it 's to hold my tongue!" and with that irate remark she walked off to bed, and the Major picked up his newspaper with a sigh.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE OF ELI'S SONS.

"ANY letters?" called out an expectant Junior, one cold day, to his chum, as he heard the well-known footstep come bounding up the staircase in the Durfree Dormitory two steps at a time. "Any for me, Charley? I see you 've quite a bundle. Hurrah! here 's three for 'yours truly,'" and Demosthenes' orations took up temporary quarters on the floor, and the mercury might have stood at top or bottom of the thermometer for all Gerald Gray would have cared when he recognized his mother's dainty chirography.

That Gerald adored his mother was a fact so palpable that no one could see them together, or even hear him mention her name, without becoming aware of the tender affection between them. In Marjorie the love she might have lavished upon her four dead baby boys seemed concentrated on Gerald; in him, his mother was his beau-ideal of

everything lovely and noble in woman. As a little fellow he was a particularly grave, almost dignified, child; even the nurse never liked to take liberties with Master Gerald. But as a growing lad his keen sense of humor cropped up, and, though in quieter fashion, he was to-day as brimful of fun as Phylis, a fact which gave great comfort to his father, who once said, when he was at a very early age, "For heaven's sake, Marjorie, don't let Gerald grow up a shy boy; the suffering is intolerable."

"You can't speak from experience," said Marjorie gayly; whereat Rex kissed her on the spot, and assured her she never could know half he had suffered in silence!

It was a hard break when Gerald went to Yale, but as Marjorie, with all her devotion, was also gifted with clear, wise sense, she kept the heartache carefully to herself, for above all things she loved her boy for his manliness, and had no mind to keep him tied to her side when the time came for him to go out into life. College life is a peculiar training of its own, and so far his father and mother had no cause to fear for Gerald. It is somewhat unusual for a student to be equally a favorite with his instructors and

his classmates, but such was Gerald's good fortune, and now that the Christmas holidays were fast approaching, he had no less than seven pressing invitations to accompany as many different fellows to their respective homes, all of which he had declined with much tact and cordiality. His room-mate and particular chum, Charley Gardner, was engaged to go to Washington to see what a "real Southern Christmas was like," and the two rooms were even now in a worse state of confusion than usual with the various belongings of the pair, who were going through with the agonies of packing up, a process to be concluded in dire haste and with much stamping of feet as soon as the last "exam" be over.

"Highly satisfactory," quoth Gerald, tucking his mother's letter carefully in his pocket, and breaking the seals of the others. "Mamma says they are expecting us on Christmas Eve and have lots of plans for our amusement. Phil 's much the same," running his eye rapidly over her letter, "a jolly fellow is Phil, I tell you, Charley. How she can ride, and I can 't give her many points now in shooting. Poor little mamma used to be so frightened over the

pistol exercises; you see Phil is a bit careless because she 's so quick, and she came precious near an accident on several occasions, which papa and I would n't have her mother know for the world."

"Well," replied Charley, glancing at a large photograph of Phylis mounted on Kaiser which stood on Gerald's table, "she looks as if she could ride; by George, I 'd like to give her a lead."

"She 's more likely to give you one," said her "big brother," with a laugh, as he picked up Demosthenes again and turned over the examination papers.

"You 're right, my boy, if she can hold her own at a flirtation," said Charley.

"Flirtation" — Gerald paused, divided between annoyance and laughter; "I wish she would. Why, Charles, be it known to you, O lady-killer of the class! that my little sister's sole idea at present is her horse — no other love has yet displaced him in her affections. I say," — in quite a different tone, — "would you mind flying over to the bank and cashing my draft for me? I can't leave this room till this paper is finished, and by that time banks are closed; that 's a good fellow," and plunging both

hands in his hair, and his elbows on the table, Gerald forgot even the homeward trip, as he settled himself at work again.

Christmas Eve in Washington is a particularly merry night. The all pervading idea with every class, rich and poor, white and colored, seems to be that this time of the year should be given up to light-hearted enjoyment. Beginning several days before, the markets and streets are filled with colored boys, men, and women laden with holly and mistletoe, and on every side you hear the cry, "Here 's yur nice fresh holly; plenty berries on dis yer; buy some fine mistletoe, madam; nebber find none no better," until one's arms are laden, and you find yourself giving indiscriminate orders to carry bunches to such and such a street, only to wonder when you finally arrive at home what disposition you can possibly make of all this lovely green and red and white Christmas.

Penelope, who had never seen anything like it in her life before, found her cold reserve melting away under Phylis's excitement, and she was the first to begin dressing the house with holly and evergreens from the gigantic pile which Mrs. Gray had pro-

vided. They were to have a house full; dear Grandpa Clive had come from Craignest, and Aunt Debby had been unable to resist Marjorie's pleading letter, so she left the Massachusetts homestead to Hannah's careful supervision and appeared, quaint and clever as ever, two days before. Of course Marjorie's hospitable soul could not omit Teddy, and his orderly had brought over a portmanteau that afternoon, Teddy himself turning up at dinnertime. And after that meal was over the fun and frolic began.

Teddy was mounted on a step-ladder at the folding-doors of the drawing-room, engaged in fastening wreaths of holly above them under Marjorie's direction, and Phylis, scissors in hand, had mounted a chair to deck Judge Gray's portrait, while Penelope handed her the sprays of holly from below, so nobody except Senator Gray heard the doorbell, and no one knew of Gerald's arrival until a tall figure stole behind Marjorie, and two hands were clasped over her eyes, as a mirthful voice cried, —

"Guess who it is!"

"Jerry, Jerry!" shouted Phylis, tumbling off her chair and flying into his arms

in a regular bear's hug; "you dear, blessed boy, how did you manage to get here so early?"

"My boy, will you never stop growing?" said his mother, surveying his six feet of young manhood with unspeakable pride.

"Gerald, you are a credit to the family in point of inches," said General Clive, straightening up his still soldierly, but always pathetic figure, with the empty coat-sleeve pinned neatly across his breast. "No," as Gerald stood up beside him, "you will have to gain one inch more to beat your grandfather."

Phylis had by this time recollected herself sufficiently to present Gerald to Penelope and be herself introduced to Charley Gardner, who had, with Senator Gray, been an amused witness of Gerald's welcome by the family. Teddy descended from his perch on the step-ladder, and there was a perfect chorus of questions and answers, in which everybody took a share. After this followed a merry supper for the hungry collegiates, and then the drawing-room was again invaded for decorating purposes and the hanging of the mistletoe.

Now the hanging of the mistletoe on

Christmas Eve was always something of a ceremony, for every year since kind Fate had given him Marjorie, Reginald Gray always tied the bunch of white waxen berries on the chandelier, and merrily kissed his wife as they stood beneath it. And to-night Marjorie looked like a girl herself, as she stood there, the light pouring down on her gray gown and the bunch of pink roses on her breast; as fair and sweet a matron as ever graced an American home of which she would be always the acknowledged centre.

The bunch of mistletoe with its long red ribbons was most carefully avoided by the rest of the company, but before the evening quite ended Gerald distinguished himself. It was the annual custom that all Christmas gifts should be placed over night on the breakfast-table, at each individual's place, and covered by napkins, which no one was allowed to raise until they all met at breakfast on Christmas Day. Mrs. Gray usually arranged the collection of boxes and bundles, but Gerald having arrived so late was allowed to carry down his contributions after the merry party had all gone off to bed. So he stole quietly along, through the library, and past the drawing-room door,

and having made circuit of the dining-room table was about to go upstairs as softly as he had come when he spied a slender figure doing something, he was not clear what, in the dim light of the drawing-room.

"Ha, ha! Phil," quoth Gerald to himself, "what 's she up to, I wonder. I 'll give her a nice fright;" so he tiptoed softly along the heavy rugs which gave back no sound of footfalls, and drew near the girlish figure which stood directly under the mistletoe. A sudden rush, an arm around her waist, a hearty boyish kiss implanted on a soft cheek, and with a start and a gasp, Gerald looked down to find his arms clasped tightly around — Penelope!

"Oh, I beg — I beg your pardon," stammered poor Gerald, quite overcome by his iniquity, while Penelope flushed red as a rose, and Phylis, choking with laughter, called out from the hall, —

"Oh, Jerry, Jerry, be these Yale teachings? Serves you right, Penelope, for coming down to do my work." But Penelope had flown upstairs with burning cheeks, and Gerald chased Phylis all the way to her room in vain attempt to shake her for her saucy behavior.

Anita Duncan had been looking forward with some anxiety to Christmas. So far, her crusade against Teddy's peace of mind and heart had not proved as successful as the young lady desired. To be sure she had convinced her aunt, Mrs. Redmond, that a secret understanding existed between them, and by dint of many sweet glances, and softly murmured words on the occasions of Teddy's presence when her aunt was in the room, had contrived to establish a very fair semblance of the state of affairs she hoped to make, erelong, a reality. Do what she would, however, Teddy had an altogether elusive way with him; a sort of will-o'-the-wisp, vanishing business, which both baffled and exasperated the fair Anita.

On Christmas Day there was to be a large family dinner at the Winships', in which Meta had included Teddy and Jack Haven. Dorothy, who had developed a keen dislike for Mrs. Redmond and Anita, implored her mother to let her seat the company, and as this was the one day in the year when Dorothy was allowed to dine with the "grown-ups" her mamma was hugely amused to find that in the plan of the table which Dorothy had sketched with great pains her own

seat was next to Phylis, with Teddy on Phylis's right, and Anita planted on the other side of the table between General Clive and Miss Debby.

Christmas morning rose bright and clear, one of the crisp bright days for which Washington is famed, and just as the late breakfast was finished and all the gifts examined and exclaimed over, the ambulance from Fort Meyer appeared at the Grays' door, and Mrs. Redmond and Anita made their way to the drawing-room.

"Anita and I thought it would be pleasant to make up a party for the skating-rink this morning," said Mrs. Redmond, after greeting all the party, and being introduced to Gerald and Charley Gardner. "The Major will find us there, and I can take three or four of you in the ambulance, and the rest can go in the electric cars."

"I think that would be jolly," said Phylis, considering herself addressed, and replying for the company. "Thank you very much, Mrs. Redmond; which of us shall go with you?"

Teddy caught a fold of Phylis's gown in his hand as she stood near him and gave it a warning tug; she looked up and met his

eyes, which plainly disapproved. But it was too late, and he resigned himself.

"Gerald, Teddy, and Penelope had better go with you, I think," said Phylis, intent on being polite, "and I will come down in the cars with Mr. Gardner and mamma."

"I think you have arranged it very well," said Mrs. Gray, "but if you will take Penelope and Gerald, Mrs. Redmond, I will bring Teddy with me, as the carriage is waiting, and we four will just fill it."

"Bless Marjorie!" cried Teddy to himself. But Anita's lowering brow conveyed her displeasure to her aunt as plainly as if she had spoken. However, pleasures and disappointments are pretty evenly divided, after all, and when the party reached the rink and the skates were brought out ready to be strapped on, Anita grew bright again, for she had an ambition to skate well, and had devoted many hours to the new fashionable fad which had recently developed in Washington, rejoicing in her opportunity to show off her new accomplishment.

The ice was crowded that morning; all fashionable Washington was astir and in evidence, and the fact that Mrs. Gray's party comprised some fine skaters brought

them at once into notice. Teddy, from his West Point experience on the Hudson, with Gerald and Charley, fresh from New Haven and Lake Saltonstall, were three unusually good skaters, while Phylis, having learned as a child at Craignest, stamped her pretty feet with a business-like air and sat down to buckle on her skates. Gerald was performing that office for Penelope, and Teddy was kneeling at Anita's feet, when he caught sight of Phylis pulling at her ankle-straps, and was up in an instant.

"I beg you to excuse me," he said, and darted off before Anita could gasp remonstrance.

"Come for a round with me, Phylis," said Teddy. "I see that Yale fellow bearing down on us, and if I don't take my chance now I 'm afraid I won't get it."

"Nonsense, Teddy," said Phylis, who regarded this as pure chaff; "I am sure you ought to go back to Miss Duncan; she will think it queer if you don't."

"Let her think," said Teddy recklessly; "I 'm going to skate with you despite the lovely Anita and the Yale masher."

"Are n't you ashamed of such a speech!" laughed Phylis, as they glided swiftly down

the rink. "I think Yale fellows are charming, especially Gerald."

"What a child she is," said Teddy to himself, with keen discomfiture; "would any other girl of sixteen have answered me like that? Oh, my little Phylis, I wonder" — but he pulled himself up and said quietly, aloud, "If you fancy all the Yale men are on Jerry's order, you 'll find yourself mistaken; he 's a rattling good fellow, Phylis, and you have reason to be proud of him."

Oh, Teddy, wily Teddy, you were repaid for that bit of honest praise by the lifting of a pair of violet eyes to yours full of the purest, sweetest pleasure. To be sure they promptly inspired you with a longing for just such another glance on your own account — but that was your proper punishment.

When Phylis had gone the round twice, she stopped near her mother's seat, and announced she would wait there for Penelope, so Teddy departed, only to be captured after a few minutes by Miss Duncan, with whom he remained for the rest of the morning.

Penelope and Gerald were apparently enjoying themselves extremely. She was a

rather timid skater, and it took all of Gerald's six feet and broad shoulders to inspire her with confidence, and she begged off from a round with Charley, with such distressed and shy politeness that Gerald could hardly help smiling at his chum's ill luck, and was relieved to find that Phylis came promptly to Charley's rescue, leaving him to look after Penelope. They made long strides to acquaintance that Christmas morning; as for Penelope, she had never been quite so contented and happy in her life, while Gerald, struck by her beauty and fascinated by her half-shy, half-cold manner, simply found her charming.

"All ready, Penelope," said Phylis that evening, just before eight o'clock, as she tapped softly on Penelope's door; "the carriage has gone with Aunt Debby, papa, grandpa, and Teddy, and you and I and mamma are to go next, while Jerry and Mr. Gardner will walk over to cousin Meta's. I declare, it 's worse than John Gilpin; such a lot of us!"

"Oh," sighed Penelope, as she appeared on the threshold, "I 'm so frightened, Phylis. This is the first dinner party I ever went to, and I don't know what will

become of me. Could n't you just shake your head at me, if you see me doing something awful?"

"What nonsense!" said Phylis, who, happening to be born with the indescribable ease of high-breeding, never knew what fear of appearances was; "all you have to do is to eat your dinner and talk to the man next you. Though perhaps it will be a woman this time; you see we are simply a huge family party, and very likely cousin Meta's men do not number enough to go round."

"Don't you think she might put me next you?" said Penelope, as they proceeded downstairs.

"Not in the least likely," said Phylis, with decision; "don't bother your head about it anyway; it will all come right. Here 's the carriage and there 's mamma," and the girls ran hastily down and were driven off to Mrs. Winship's.

They were the last to arrive, but Penelope found Gerald waiting in the hall, and at a sign from his mother he accompanied them into the drawing-room and Penelope took refuge behind the tall figure and managed to make her entrance.

Dorothy was the queen of the evening.

It chanced that it was her birthday, as well as Christmas, and the child, in her quaint, old-fashioned way, received their congratulations very prettily. In her usual awkward fashion Mrs. Redmond managed to say something disagreeable, however, and Anita overheard her aunt's remark.

"Well, Dorothy, you have had a good Christmas? And coming to a dinner party, too, dear; how can your mother let you sit up until such an hour! Perhaps that 's the reason why you look so sallow."

"Yes, ma'am," said Dorothy innocently, but quite equal to the occasion; "is that what made you so?" Fortunately for Dorothy dinner was announced at that instant, and Teddy took out the little maid, with a smile which he was unable to conceal.

Anita, who, when she pleased, had extremely good manners, finding herself between Miss Debby and General Clive, with Teddy far away on the other side of the table, proceeded to make herself as agreeable as she possibly could to the old gentleman, and as Miss Debby had the seat of honor at Judge Winship's right hand, she did not feel slighted, although she was somewhat amused at the young girl's evident

effort. Judge Winship, who was much struck with Anita's blonde prettiness, included her in several very gallant compliments, and the dinner, as a whole (though not at all as Anita had hoped it would be), passed off much to her satisfaction.

After dinner, to the great delight of the young people, soft strains of music were heard issuing from the ballroom, and Mrs. Winship announced that she had concluded to wind up with a dance, a statement that filled Gerald with infinite satisfaction, which was somewhat tempered when he discovered that Charley had been lucky enough to secure Penelope for the first two dances. Other young guests began to arrive, and as these included most of Phylis's school-friends, she flew around, and, aided by Dorothy, introduced Gerald and Charley to the girls, with a view to having everybody enjoy themselves as much as possible. Teddy, finding it impossible to capture her, had gone off for a square dance with Mrs. Winship, and Phylis, returning from getting a partner for Charley, slipped into a seat in the hall to rest a second, where she was presently joined by Dorothy, her eyes big with excitement.

"Oh, Phylis," said she in a whisper,

"I've just heard Mrs. Redmond saying the queerest things to your mother. I was n't listening — no, indeed! I was only getting a glass of water, and they were on the other side of the portière, and could n't see me."

"Why, what are you so excited about, pray?" asked Phylis.

"Because," said Dorothy, "what do you think she said? — Mrs. Redmond, I mean. Why, that Teddy (Mr. Frost, that is) had been *awfully* in love with Miss Anita for *ever* so long, and in the best of her opinion" — here Dorothy's voice rose in unconscious mimicry — "they would be engaged!"

"Engaged!" echoed Phylis, feeling a curious bound in the region of her heart, and distinctly disapproving of the novel sensation. "Engaged — Teddy? Are you quite sure you understood, Dorothy?"

"Yes, indeed," returned the child, "for I can't bear Mrs. Redmond or Miss Anita, and I should be so sorry; I don't think your mamma was pleased either."

"What did she say?" said Phylis, with a start, the blood returning to its proper location in her cheeks.

"She said, 'Are you quite sure, Mrs. Redmond? Because I think reports of this

kind are a great mistake and often do much harm. And Teddy does not seem to me to be contemplating matrimony just at present.' "

"How did you ever manage two such long words as that?" said Phylis, with a relieved face. "Of course, mamma would know, the first one, if it were true. Don't mention it, Dorothy; I 'm sure it was never intended for your ears or mine."

"I never betray secrets," said the little maid with dignity, "but I just *had* to tell you, Phylis. And, for my part, I don't believe one word that woman says."

"What is Dorothy talking about?" said her mother, appearing before them; "'that woman' sounds very forbidding, my dear. Phylis, my partner has been trying to find out where you were during our whole dance, so I came with him to look you up."

"Here 's our waltz, Phylis," said Teddy gayly, as he drew her hand in his arm and walked off to the ballroom. "I 've a fancy you can dance as well as ride, which will be another bond between us." And as they went gliding around the room, Senator Gray caught sight of Phylis's bright face smiling up at her partner and said to himself with

amused dismay, "That child is growing up, and if I 'm not mistaken, Teddy has begun to discover it."

But late that night, after talking over all the fun and frolic of the day with Penelope, Phylis bounded into her bed, and said aloud, apparently addressing the four walls of her pretty bedroom: —

"I won't believe it! — Old cat!" — and giving her pillow a vicious thump, Phylis rolled over and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE.

THE Christmas holidays passed off very gayly for the inmates of the Gray household. Among the younger, school-girl set, there were pleasant dances at early hours, and with Phylis and Penelope always ready for any fun, Gerald and Charley put in a "rattling good time," as modern slang expressed it, and were fully as sorry to leave Washington for Yale as the girls could have been to have them go. It was a little hard, as Phylis remarked with a sigh, "to have to return to school and the grind," but matters settled themselves into steady routine after a short time, and the girls already began to count the days which must intervene before Easter.

Teddy found himself in a perfect round of gayety. He was young, handsome, and immensely popular; the ball was at his feet and every house open to him, so his time was fully occupied with a succession of

balls, dinners, and dances. But he never allowed any engagement to interfere with his Sunday afternoon and dinner at the Grays', and Marjorie, as she looked into his frank, honest eyes, congratulated herself that so far, at least, Teddy had gotten into no scrape so serious that he was afraid to tell her of it. Mrs. Redmond's remarks had been dismissed from her mind, but they had the effect of drawing her attention to Anita Duncan, and it must be acknowledged that the more Mrs. Gray saw of that young lady the less she liked her. Marjorie's was a very simple, direct nature; anything like manœuvring or dramatic effects always repelled her, and she was too much of a woman of the world not to appreciate Anita's quiet, but unceasing endeavor to pose for the gallant young officer, who seemed almost unconscious of her little game.

Just before the holidays, Mrs. Paulding, a good deal to her annoyance, had been obliged to make several changes in her teachers, and this included a very radical one. Up to that time, the various members of the school corps had been women, but owing to the serious illness of her music-

teacher, and the departure of the lady who taught Latin and German, Mrs. Paulding had been obliged to fill their places with gentlemen. Her new music-teacher, Signor Fabriani, was, as his name indicated, an Italian, rather a younger and handsomer man than Mrs. Paulding altogether thought desirable, but it was in the very middle of the scholastic year, and teachers with the proper testimonials were difficult to secure, so she took him with many an inward protest, hoping she should not have cause to repent the arrangement. He was very gentlemanly, quiet, and business-like, and after a month or so had gone by and the music pupils improved as they should, the much-tried and perhaps over-anxious principal drew a long breath of satisfaction, and settled down for a tranquil half-year.

One morning, late in February, the class in English literature assembled for recitation, and waited five, yes, ten minutes for Mrs. Paulding to appear, but her chair was still vacant, and a buzz and murmur began to creep around the room as the expectant girls began to wonder what could be the matter. In general, when Mrs. Paulding from illness or any other cause was unable

to take her class, Miss Clark usually filled her place, but the moments stole away, and as nobody came, the class wondered what could have happened.

At last, having waited fifteen minutes, and the hour for French being close at hand, the girls were opening their exercises in that language, when the door opened suddenly, and with a swift step Mrs. Paulding entered. Every eye turned on her, and Estelle Lawrence whispered to Phylis, "My, what 's up! Some of us are going to catch it, you bet."

"Young ladies," said Mrs. Paulding, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long that the English literature class can have no recitation this morning." There was a little rustle, and closing of books, but Mrs. Paulding raised her hand, and continued: "Keep your seats, if you please; I wish to ask the class a question. Will you kindly inform me at once which of you have been endeavoring to conduct a correspondence with Signor Fabriani?"

If a bombshell had exploded in the centre of the school-room it could hardly have created more consternation! Some of the girls blushed, some tittered, some gazed open-

eyed at the principal, and all displayed the liveliest astonishment. But Phylis, with her bright, keen eyes, saw one girl run her hand into her pocket and apparently shove something closely down into it.

"You do not answer," said Mrs. Paulding sternly; "shall I be obliged to repeat my question?"

Phylis rose in her seat. "We don't quite understand, Mrs. Paulding," she said, in her clear, soft voice. "I am sure there is a mistake. Will you please tell us what you mean by asking us?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Paulding, looking kindly toward her. Phylis, she was pretty sure, could be depended upon, but she never showed partiality, and therefore the investigation must be conducted equally for all.

"At the close of the music hour Signor Fabriani came to my study, and in a most gentlemanly manner, with much distress and many apologies, gave me three letters which he has received at short intervals, apparently from some one or two of the pupils in my school. They have been found secreted in his hat," — here Maud was heard to giggle, but a severe pinch from Hester Dulaney reduced her to silence, — "and are remarkable

specimens. Two of them are printed with an attempt at disguise; the third is a most love-lorn and undignified appeal which I am mortified and ashamed — yes, young ladies, ashamed to have had composed and sent to a gentleman by any member of my school. Of course Signor Fabriani considers that some one has been endeavoring to play a joke (a very poor one, I must say) upon him, and in the most straightforward manner he told me the whole story. Now, girls, do not be frightened; if you, any one of you, will at once confess the trick I will forgive you and say no more about it, except that I shall require the culprit to apologize to Signor Fabriani."

There arose a chorus of "No, no," from eager voices. But again Phylis noticed one girl glance furtively around her even as she uttered the disclaimer.

"Then it narrows itself down to one person," said Mrs. Paulding, with genuine distress, "and but for that girl's persistent silence, I should not have questioned the whole school. I regret to say that one of my scholars, while she does not confess, will not absolutely deny her share in the matter; it is Penelope Leigh."

In one second Phylis sprang to her feet, and her indignant tones rang out, "No, never! It 's not Penelope, Mrs. Paulding; I 'll answer for Penelope every time. She 's shy and queer, and may be frightened, but she 's as true as steel;" and wheeling around toward Penelope's seat, to her surprise and dismay Phylis saw it was empty.

"My dear Phylis," said Mrs. Paulding, "I knew you would defend her, and I wish with all my heart that the mystery be cleared up. But when I tell you that the last letter is in Penelope's handwriting, and that she acknowledges it *is* her hand, you will see that your generous defense of her cannot be sustained by the facts in the case."

Phylis sank into her seat; her knees shook so that she could not stand, and she was actually pale from excitement and dismay.

"The class is dismissed," said Mrs. Paulding; "you will go immediately to French. I need hardly add that I do not wish this matter mentioned outside of the school by any one, and I put you upon honor not to repeat the circumstance. Phylis, you may remain; I wish to speak to you," and the girls filed out much more quietly than usual, leaving Phylis with her teacher.

"Mrs. Paulding, what do you mean?" said Phylis, taking the initiative, in her excitement, "Where is Penelope?"

"In her own room, my dear."

"May n't I run up and see her?" said Phylis eagerly. "I am sure I can get an explanation in five minutes, for indeed, indeed, Mrs. Paulding, it 's not one bit like her; if you only knew her as well as I do."

"She does not wish to see you," said Mrs. Paulding. "I said I would send you up before you went home, and she declined. She said, 'If you wish to punish me, you can do so, Mrs. Paulding, but I do not want to distress Phylis, who has been very kind to me.'"

"But I don't understand," said Phylis, biting her lips to keep the tears of sympathy from falling down her cheeks; "what did Penelope say, anyhow?"

"It was in this way, my dear," said Mrs. Paulding gently. "I recognized Penelope's handwriting, and when I sent for her and told her the story, and showed her the sheet of paper, she turned very pale, and drawing herself up, in that cold way of hers, said, —

"'Yes, that is my handwriting, but I did not send it to Signor Fabriani, or any one else.'"

"Then she did n't," cried Phylis, bursting into tears. "Penelope *always* tells the truth."

"How can you be so sure of that?" said Mrs. Paulding; "you have only known her a few months."

"Oh, I must see her," said Phylis. "It 's all nonsense, I know it is. Somebody 's been playing tricks" — and then she pulled herself up abruptly; "please excuse me, Mrs. Paulding; can I see the letters?"

"Not before Monday, my dear; I have a little investigation on my own account, for both Miss Clark and I agree in thinking that there is more than one person concerned in the affair, and Miss Clark has taken the notes home with her to compare with some exercises. Do not speak of her having done so, Phylis; you know I trust your discretion."

"But I may tell mamma?" asked Phylis.

"Certainly," said her teacher; "I wish you would. I should be glad of Mrs. Gray's opinion."

"But dear Mrs. Paulding, you said Monday; surely you don't mean that Penelope is not to come home with me for Washington's Birthday — our holiday; and we were

going to Mount Vernon, too; oh, *please* let her come."

"I am sorry, very sorry," said Mrs. Paulding; "but so long as Penelope is only willing to give me partial confidence, I agree with her in thinking her own room and reflection the best place for her. I hope it will all end as we wish, although even if Penelope is not the guilty party, some one of my pupils is answerable, and that is hard enough for me," and kissing Phylis affectionately, Mrs. Paulding went upstairs.

As Phylis went into the hall to get her wraps after leaving Mrs. Paulding, she was seized by Dorothy, in a state of excitement.

"Oh, Phil!" cried the little girl under her breath, "I 've got something to tell you; do stop just a minute."

"I can't, my mosquito; I have to fly home and see mamma before she gets off to a reception. Put on your hat, Dorothy, and come with me as far as Sixteenth Street."

"Of course I will," said Dorothy, struggling with the big buttons on her coat, "and as I don't want any one to hear me — hush," and she tiptoed down the steps and did n't draw a free breath until they were fairly in the street.

"Well, what is it?" asked Phylis, in, it must be confessed, a rather preoccupied manner.

"You 're not paying a bit of attention," said Dorothy, aggrieved. "I thought you 'd be interested in those notes that all the school are talking about."

"So I am," said Phylis, stopping short, and looking keenly at the child. "How in the world did you find out about it?"

"Did n't Mrs. Paulding ask us all — we little girls, just as well as you big ones — if we knew anything?" said Dorothy loftily. "Phylis, I don't know a thing about it, but I certainly did come plump on one of the girls — who was poking in your desk two days ago."

"In my desk?" said Phylis, mystified; "what has that to do with all this?"

"Have you missed anything among your papers?" said Dorothy.

"No, I don't think there is anything there of importance except the papers for examination, which were given out on Tuesday, and the little play I am writing for — Oh! I forgot, that's a secret, Dorothy, and you must n't say one word about it."

"I promise," said Dorothy, too intent on

what she was thinking of to pay much attention, "but the same girl I saw hunting in your desk was poking around with Signor Fabriani's hat yesterday, for I came into the hall, coming upstairs, and when she saw me she clapped the hat on her head and asked me if I did n't think it was becoming."

"Dorothy Winship," said Phylis, "tell me this instant who that girl was."

"Hester Dulaney," said the little girl.

"Hester!" cried Phylis; "oh, Dorothy, why did n't you go straight and tell Mrs. Paulding?"

"Because I don't tell tales," said Dorothy indignantly, "even if I *am* a little girl."

"But, my mosquito, this is quite a different matter. Don't you know that a poor girl is being made to suffer from suspicion, and I am determined to get at the bottom of the affair."

"Well," said Dorothy, standing still, "am I to go back and see Mrs. Paulding now, Phylis?"

"On second thought, no, Dorothy. But if you 'll give me leave, I 'll tell her on Monday, and then if Mrs. Paulding wants to ask you some questions, she will do so."

"And you won't let the big girls think I told tales on them?"

"No, of course I will not. Good-by; here 's my corner," and the girls separated on their homeward way.

"Mamma, dear mamma," cried Phylis, bursting into Mrs. Gray's room a few minutes later, "please send Félice away and let me help you dress. I have something *very* important to say to you."

Mrs. Gray, always ready to attend to Phylis, and interested in everything which concerned her, no matter how trivial, complied with her request, and Phylis told her story, going straight to the point, as usual.

"There is a mistake, somewhere," said Mrs. Gray, as Phylis paused to take breath; "have you any idea what it is?"

"I think some of the girls have been trying to play a joke," said Phylis. "I noticed that Hester looked very queer while Mrs. Paulding was talking to us, and I distinctly saw her fumbling in her pocket. And then Dorothy's story came so pat; what do you think I 'd better do, mamma dear?"

"Nothing to-day," said her mother. "I will stop and see Mrs. Paulding before I come home. Do not fret, Phylis, there is

sure to be some explanation. I do not believe Penelope is to blame, although the foolish girl is taking the very way to make us believe so, and I am thankful Aunt Debby is not here."

"Do you think Aunt Debby cares much about Penelope?" asked Phylis, greatly relieved now that her mother had taken the matter in her hands.

"Very much more than Penelope imagines. You don't know Aunt Debby as I do; she has the warmest, tenderest heart under that queer, brusque exterior, and never does herself justice except on rare occasions. Phylis, my dear, that pin is running directly into my neck; you had better call Félice," and with a kiss and nod, Phylis vanished.

It was growing quite dark and the gas lamps in the streets gave a faint light which penetrated into the shadows of the room where Penelope sat, her hands folded in her lap, her head thrown back, a forlorn, slender figure in the big armchair. There were traces of tears on the delicate cheeks, and the sombre eyes looked pathetically forth into the darkened streets.

"It's no use," she said to herself, "no use

at all. I 'm always getting into scrapes, and it does n't much matter. If I say one word to Phylis, she 'll tell, and then all her pleasant surprise for Mrs. Paulding at Easter will be spoiled. Fancy anybody's supposing I would have anything to do with that simpering Italian teacher!" — and Penelope lifted her small head haughtily enough at the bare idea. "If I only could find out which of those girls played the trick — I would n't shield them at all events, much as I dislike tattling."

A rap at the door. Penelope started, and said quickly, "Come in!" but she sprang from the chair as she saw Mrs. Gray standing on the threshold.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Gray, how kind!" she cried. "I 'll light the gas, — just wait half a minute," and placing her visitor in the arm-chair she turned up the lights at once.

"Penelope," said Marjorie, as she drew the girl close in her arms with an affectionate kiss, "I have n't come here to scold you. But don't you think that your position is a mistaken one? I do not believe that you ever condescended to a practical joke in your life — neither does Mrs. Paulding."

"She did n't say so," said Penelope. "She

said that until I explained she must withdraw her confidence in me."

"Well, my dear, was that unreasonable?"

"No, perhaps not," said Penelope. "It *is* my handwriting, you know."

"Here is the letter," said Mrs. Gray, with a smile just quivering around her eyes, and looking searchingly at the girl as she spoke.

"Oh!" sighed Penelope, half in chagrin, half relieved, "you've guessed it, Mrs. Gray?" But before Marjorie had time to reply a second knock came on the door, and not waiting for permission, Phylis herself bounced into the room.

"Mrs. Paulding said I might come up.

"Oh, mamma, she's found out from Miss Clark who wrote the first two letters"—

"Who wrote this?" said her mother quietly, handing her the half-sheet of notepaper which had caused all this trouble.

"Oh!" gasped Phylis, — "this? why, this is Rosamond's speech to Sir Hugo — Penelope! oh, you dear blessed goose, I see it all," and down on the floor sat Phylis, while her girlish laughter filled the room.

"Well," sighed Penelope, looking from one to the other, "then it was all for nothing."

"For nothing," echoed Phylis, scrambling up and throwing her arms around Penelope's neck; "of all loyal-hearted girls in this world commend me to you! You see, mamma, I 've written a play" —

"It sounded remarkably familiar," said her mother, laughing merrily.

"Mamma, you 're a witch; I knew all would come straight the moment you touched it," said Phylis confidently. "It 's a play for Easter that we three girls (Estelle, Penelope, and I) were to act as a surprise for Mrs. Paulding, and we all promised not to let out the secret. Not another girl in school knew it. Penelope copied some of my pothooks for me, and the interesting person who went poking in my desk for good raw material certainly found it! What she did was to send it to Signor Fabriani, and I think it 's a mean, horrid trick, so I do!" and Phylis ended most indignantly.

"So rather than betray my girl, you took the punishment," said Mrs. Gray, looking at Penelope with tears in her eyes.

"You 're the stuff martyrs are made of," quoth Phylis, giving her a shake.

"No, I 'm not," said Penelope reluctantly; "but — you are the only girl who has ever

really believed in me, Phylis, and it seemed only fair that I should keep your little secret."

"At such a price?" said Phylis. "Well, now I presume you can come home with us, and we 'll all go to Mount Vernon to-morrow. Let 's run down and tell Mrs. Paulding;" and dragging Penelope after her, she left her mother to follow them downstairs.

The Mount Vernon party went off successfully next day, but on Monday Signor Fabriani received his apology, though not from Penelope. Through the aid of some exercises in Hester's handwriting, Miss Clark had discovered the author of the practical joke, and although Mrs. Paulding might have pardoned that, she could not excuse the tacit falsehood before the whole school, when Hester had her opportunity to confess and was afraid to do so. So, the week after, Hester was taken out of school for a trip to Florida, and the matter was allowed to drop without further remark.

"But I 'll never forget it, never," wrote Phylis to Gerald, giving him an account of the whole proceeding; "and you mark my words that if ever there was a trump in this world, first and last, that same is Penelope Leigh."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE FLY ESCAPED THE SPIDER.

THE Commandant at Fort Meyer was about to give a garden party, and the entire post was in a state of excitement on account of it. All through the winter the Colonel and his gay, pretty daughter, Mrs. Goddard, had been the recipients of much kindness and civility from Washingtonians, and although they had reciprocated by numerous breakfasts and dinners, yet these, necessarily, could not include all their entertainers, so the "garden party" was evolved as a scheme calculated to cover all outstanding obligations. The weather had been the source of the utmost anxiety for days, but as they had already been favored with many and frequent April showers, when the sun came up with an evident intention of doing his duty, his whole duty, on the eventful morning, there was rejoicing among the officers and ladies of the — Cavalry.

Mrs. Redmond, bustling around, arrayed

in what she was pleased to call "a jacket and skirt," was agreeably surprised to find Anita up and doing, at the early hour of nine o'clock, as she came into the parlor.

"Well, you are early," was her salutation. "Are you going in to help Mrs. Goddard?"

"Not until I am asked," said Anita, much less pushing, in a way, than her respected relative. "But I did think I might as well see about putting those tables and chairs out in the garden if they are to be used. How do you think a few rugs would look also? It 's not as damp as it was yesterday, but the rugs would be pretty on the grass."

"And it wouldn 't hurt them, either," chimed in her aunt, beginning to roll up one which decorated the hall floor. "Here comes the Colonel's orderly; I wonder what 's needed now?"

The soldier came up the steps and delivered his message. "Mrs. Goddard's compliments to Miss Duncan; would she please come over for a few minutes?"

"There," said Mrs. Redmond, "I knew she could n't get through without some help from us. Run along, Anita, and be sure you come back and tell me what 's wanting before the Major goes into town."

Anita opened the garden gate, and, crossing that small area, mounted the four steps which led into it from the Commandant's side. She found Mrs. Goddard counting out teacups, assisted by a maid servant, while two orderlies were moving the furniture, as she directed.

"Oh, here you are," said Mrs. Goddard, shaking two dainty fingers in her direction; "do excuse my sending for you so early, but I quite forgot to ask you last night whether you preferred the tea or the punch table, and as both the Edwards and the Gordons are coming, I was afraid of confusion unless I settled it beforehand."

"I 'm sure you are very kind," said Anita, "and if I may have a choice I would like the punch-table." Anita had not studied Washington teas without profit. She knew that once planted at a regular tea-table, with all its paraphernalia, she would be obliged to stop there until the last thirsty woman was supplied with an indefinite number of cups; but at the punch-table, whenever she wanted to slip away or talk to a masculine caller it was easy enough to relegate the punch-ladle to one of the other girls assisting, and her hostess would never be a bit the wiser.

"Aunt Rhoda thought we could lay some of our rugs on the grass in the garden," pursued Anita, "and perhaps a table or two would look well also."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Goddard, wondering what had come over her usually most unaccommodating neighbor, and instantly divining that this must be Anita's suggestion. "Would you prefer having the punch out there?"

"I think it would be nice," said Anita prettily, "and perhaps one of the Edwards girls would like to come there with me."

"Just as you please," said Mrs. Goddard, putting the last cup in its place, and rising as she spoke, with the idea just dawning upon her that this had probably been Anita's little plan from the beginning; "have you any commissions for town? My orderly is just going in."

"Oh no, thank you," said Anita; "the Major is starting in a few moments and I must run back and see if Aunt Rhoda needs me before he goes. I'll be all ready by half past three, Mrs. Goddard, and please let me help you in any way that I can."

"It 's all right," announced Anita, pouncing on Mrs. Redmond in her own hall,

"I 'm to have the punch-table in our garden, and you 'll see if we won't get all the best and smartest people around it. Now, Aunt Rhoda, do, *please* keep away from me this afternoon, and fix the study up with some flowers, and have all the Mexican photographs out, and — you 'll see if I don't succeed in having a thoroughly satisfactory time, that 's all."

"Meta said she was coming over early, and the Grays will be here, for I heard Mrs. Goddard say so. Anita, do you think I 'd better wear my lilac silk or the black and white?" But that was a question which Anita skillfully evaded, both gowns being equally ugly and equally inappropriate to their owner, and she left Mrs. Redmond consulting the Major on that important point, as she departed upstairs.

"For Lieutenant Frost with Miss Duncan's compliments," said Teddy's orderly that afternoon, knocking at the door where his officer was making a hasty toilet; "if you please, sir, I was to give it to yourself." There was a muttered growl from inside which might easily be construed into something far from a blessing, and an impatient hand was thrust through the crack

of the door for the small box intrusted to it.

"Why in the world does she keep on doing it?" groaned Teddy, opening the box and finding, as he suspected, a pretty *boutonnière* inside it; "I wish to Heaven she would n't! I 'm a cad if I go on wearing her flowers, and, hang it! I 'm a cad if I don't. I 'll put a stop to it this very day. I saw Marjorie looking rather questioningly at my white violets at the German on Friday, and I feel confident that Mrs. Redmond has been saying something to her about her niece and me. I 've been almost rude to the girl, — I 've sneaked round corners for weeks to avoid her; I 've begged off invitations from the Major until I 'm sure he 's half vexed with me. Well! here goes for the last time," and with an air of resolution, Teddy fastened the bunch of white violets in his coat and rushed off to look up Jack Haven.

The day proved a lovely one, and carriage after carriage rolled through the gates at Fort Meyer and deposited their inmates at the Commandant's door. Inside were a bevy of ladies belonging to the post, and a contingent from Washington whose hus-

bands were on duty in the War Department; and when the carriage and liveries of the Secretary of War were seen approaching, Mrs. Goddard's spirits rose to their utmost. Out on the lawn were two tents, and the stars and stripes not only floated from the flagstaff, but decorated every available spot, and gave the gala air to the whole post, so attractive in all army and navy fêtes.

Anita, very prettily gowned and surrounded by a stream of callers, began to wonder why Teddy was so long absent, and finally discovered him out on the lawn with Mrs. Winship and one of the Gordon girls. This did n't suit her plans, and she began to manœuvre to get away from her table, when, to her delight, she beheld the two she had been watching come slowly down the steps into the garden.

"Good-morning," said Mrs. Winship, "how charmingly you have arranged everything. The first garden party of the season may be said to be a success."

"It 's nice of you to say so," responded Anita, "because at an army post we do things after a style of our own."

"It is the novelty that makes the charm, then," said Mrs. Winship. "I know that

when I first went to West Point it seemed to me nothing could ever equal a graduating ball, and even Yale students paled before the glory of a cadet."

"May I ask how old you were at that visit?" said Teddy.

"Just sixteen," said Mrs. Winship, laughing, "and I recollect my uncle, Judge Gray, who had taken me there with some girls of my own age, warned us that there must be no recruiting among his party."

"I don't believe you obeyed," said Teddy mischievously. "I happen to know of one gay and gallant general who" —

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Winship, tapping him with her fan, "this is ancient history and cannot interest Miss Duncan. I am going indoors to find Mrs. Redmond; I will see you again," and she passed in.

"Will you take some of my punch?" asked Anita, holding up a tempting glass of the icy liquid.

"No, thanks," said Teddy. "Evidently you have had plenty of applicants for it, as the bowl seems to need replenishing. Shall I call Somers to fill it?"

"You won't find him. Somers is probably at the back gate flirting with the

maids. Really, he is quite the Adonis of the post."

"He always is," said Teddy, whose orderly was in constant hot water from his numerous love affairs, and thereby afforded him great amusement.

"I shall, on second thought, have to go and find him," said Anita; "come with me to the study window; he is within call there." So Teddy, perceiving that his hour had come for a *tête-à-tête*, bethought himself of his valiant resolve, and followed the fair lady into the house.

Anita's premonition proved quite correct; for, as the pair looked out of the study window, protected by the green blind, there was Somers in jaunty undress, chatting with Mrs. Goddard's maid and Mrs. Redmond's cook, across the gate.

"It's a pity to disturb him," quoth Teddy, "but here goes — Somers!" singing out in tones that caused the soldier to spring to attention, and the maids to scuttle into their respective houses, "Miss Duncan desires you to replenish the punch-bowl in the garden at once."

"Yes, sir," replied the soldier, as he vanished in the necessary direction.

"Have you ever seen the Mexican photographs?" asked Anita, resolving that now the fly had walked into the spider's parlor he should not escape so easily; "the Major collected them at Fort Clark, and they really are wonderfully fine."

Teddy, with an inward groan, sat down, hoping that kind Fate would not send Marjorie past the open door. He turned over the portfolio, and admired and explained for some fifteen minutes, when, as he stooped to pick up a fallen picture, his white violets broke off and fell from his buttonhole to the floor. As he picked them up, Anita took the flowers from his hand.

"They are not as pretty as they should have been," she said; "it 's a little late for them now."

"I have n't thanked you for them," said Teddy. "You are most kind, Miss Anita; but pray don't send me any more."

"No more?" she said, growing pale. "I do not understand you."

"I mean just that," said Teddy resolutely; "we 've always been good friends, and I don't wish anybody to misunderstand. If I wear your flowers (of which I 'm sure I am not half worthy) I am simply encour-

aging gossip on the post, and keeping other and nicer fellows away."

Anita's sleepy brown eyes lit with a slow, dangerous fire ; she drew her brows together and faced him.

"So!" she said deliberately. "Who is the girl for whose sake you wish to insult me?"

Teddy became a beautiful and most unbecoming red; he was savage at his own embarrassment, and he never felt like such an idiot in the course of his life, as he did with the small figure standing opposite him the picture of incarnate fury.

"I have neither the desire nor intention to insult you," he said, quite calmly. "You willfully misunderstand me. I prefer to remain friends with you, — I never quarrel with a lady, — but you must pardon me if I decline to be put in a false position any longer. Come, Miss Anita," — regaining his entire self-possession, and speaking with his usual easy grace, — "let us shake hands and forget the last five minutes."

"Forget!" she cried wildly ; "no, never! nor shall you!" and before Teddy could prevent it she threw both arms around his neck, sobbing violently.

Teddy grew cool in a second. Emergencies always found him at his best, and in another minute he had laid the fair Anita on the sofa, pulled the bell for the maid, and looked up to find Major Redmond in the doorway, surveying them with the utmost surprise.

"The heat seems to have overcome Miss Duncan," said Teddy, with unruffled composure, thanking the gods that it was the Major and not his better half who had come to the rescue. "I am trying to persuade her to go to her room and rest for a while."

"May Heaven forgive him for that same gigantic fib," muttered the Major to himself, as he laid Anita, now in violent hysterics, flat on her back; but he only said aloud, "You 're quite right, Frost; just ask Dr. McPherson to step here, will you? Oh, here 's Margaret," as the maid entered the room; "close the door as you go out, and wait for me in the hall," and as Teddy obeyed Major Redmond gave his niece into her maid's hands and followed him.

"Teddy," said the Major, putting a kindly hand on his junior officer's shoulder and looking him squarely in the eye, "are you to blame for that, or are you not?"

"No, sir," said Teddy respectfully, but

standing his ground like the manly fellow he was. "I 've done nothing that I 'm ashamed of, or that you could have cause for blame."

"I believe you," said the Major heartily; "then, my lad, we 'll say no more about it to any one," and with a warm pressure of his hand, Teddy walked out into the garden and the Major went to find the doctor.

Dr. McPherson was found, and dosed Anita with valerian and ammonia, and recommended rest and quiet to the writhing and furious patient. If the doctor thought it temper and not nerves, he was too wise to say so, and he parried all Mrs. Redmond's questions by saying that too many balls and too much dissipation were the exciting causes of Anita's attack. When Anita had successfully torn her nightdress into strips with her teeth, and pulled several strands of hair from her head, she convinced her amazed aunt that for once she had encountered a domestic tornado which excelled even her own best efforts in that line, and Mrs. Redmond was obliged to retire from the room with her curiosity ungratified. But when the last guest drove off, she captured the reluctant Major and plied him with questions,

which he replied to with never a hint as to Teddy's presence on the scene.

"Well, if that sort of thing continues," said Mrs. Redmond, "I shall just pack Anita off to Emily again. I don't believe in hysterics, and she ought to have more self-control."

"I thought you and Anita were growing so fond of each other," said the Major; "and beside, she is so much company for you."

"Yes, and for you," retorted his wife. "Well, perhaps she won't be with me very long, as by all I can see young Frost is pretty devoted to her. He will be a very good match."

"When he marries," said the Major dryly.

CHAPTER X.

A REAL LIVE PRINCESS.

"I HAVE just five minutes to stop, Marjorie," said Teddy, swinging off his saddle, and helping Phylis to dismount, "but I want to ask you if the girls and you will come over to the Fort one day this week and let Phylis take those photographs which she has been wanting to try for so long."

"With pleasure," said Mrs. Gray, who had just left her carriage and waited to greet the pair on her own steps; "but why this haste, Teddy? Can't you come in and have a cup of tea?"

"Not to-day, thanks; we are to act as escort this evening for the Infanta of Spain on her arrival in Washington, and I must go back and see what I have to attend to beforehand."

"We are dining to-night with Mrs. Winship to meet the Duc de Veraguas, and at the British Embassy on Saturday to meet the Infanta," said Mrs. Gray. "I suppose

we shall see you at the Embassy reception after the dinner?"

"Oh, yes," said Teddy; "I wish you were going, Phylis."

"I don't," said Phylis; "such a crowd, and no dancing. Thank you, Teddy; but, although I don't much care for the reception business, I confess I do want to see the Infanta. If I only knew the hour of her coming and going from her hotel I would go and stand on the sidewalk and see her."

"Not in the crowd on the sidewalk," said Teddy, decidedly disapproving.

"And why not? Have n't I often done so before? Oh, you don't know Washington ways yet, Teddy; they are not one bit like Northern ones. I 'll wager you anything you like I 'll do it."

"Taken up," said Teddy, only half convinced of the propriety of such a proceeding, much to Mrs. Gray's amusement; "and regardless of my wager, I 'll give you a straight tip."

"Oh, will you? that 's a dear!" quoth Phylis, clapping her hands with delight.

"The Infanta is going to call at the Executive Mansion to-morrow, and I am ordered with my company to act as escort for her

from her hotel and back. There 's your chance, Phylis," and Teddy laughed in spite of himself at the idea of Phylis inspecting royalty in that democratic fashion.

"This is more than I bargained for," said Phylis, — "a troop of cavalry and you in full uniform. I shall have to go for Dorothy, mamma; you know the child is perfectly daft to see a 'real live Princess,' as she calls her. Teddy, you certainly are a brick!" and drawing herself up, Phylis touched her cap in military salute, and, gathering her habit in her hands, vanished inside the open door.

"How you do spoil Phylis," said Mrs. Gray; "you are just as bad as the rest of us."

"Can't help it," said Teddy, with a queer glance. "You are responsible for having her grow up such a fascinating mixture of child and woman."

"You 'll please to remember that she 's only the first," said her mother. "Teddy, Teddy, will you oblige me by not trying to turn my girl's head with your nonsense?"

"She 's far more likely to turn mine," whispered Teddy, in her ear, and then he mounted in all haste and rode away.

"I wonder if Teddy was more in earnest than jest," said Marjorie to herself as she ascended the staircase; "and yet — I don't know, I 'll ask Rex," and she dismissed the subject from her mind.

Among other topics that spring the visit of the Duc de Veraguas and that of the Infanta Eulalia of Spain were the most interesting and absorbing to the residents of the Capital, and arrangements were made on a grand scale to entertain the Spanish visitors privately as well as publicly. Of course Dorothy Winship heard a great deal of it, as her mother was to give both a dinner and reception for the ducal descendant of Christopher Columbus, but the little girl's chief desire and longing was to see "a real, live Princess," and without saying a word to anybody, she planned out a way in which she thought she might accomplish it.

Dorothy had her own maid, who looked especially after the little girl in the matter of toilet, and who took particular pride in her dainty dresses and lovely, long, curling auburn hair. On the morning after the Infanta's arrival, Belinda was very much amused to see Dorothy, after her own dressing was completed, stand back and survey

her from head to foot with a most critical eye.

"Where are your new collars, Belinda?" said the child gravely; "they fit you much better than these. And have you got an all-black dress — a Sunday one?"

"The collars are up in my room, Miss Dorothy," said Belinda, "and of course I 've got another black gown. Why do you want to know?"

"Because an all-black dress and white collars and cuffs is the proper dress for an English maid," said Dorothy serenely. "That 's what I heard my mamma tell Mrs. Redmond the other day when she wanted to know if you were in mourning."

"But I 'm not an English maid," said Belinda, much diverted. "The maids here wear just the same, Miss Dorothy, except the caps. A cap is n't becoming to me, so I don't wear one."

"You have a very nice bonnet," said Dorothy; "for I saw you with it on last week. Well, I want you to put on the nicest, the *very* nicest black dress you own and your best-fitting collar and cuffs, and then the bonnet, for I am going to send you on a most important errand."

"May I ask where, Miss Dorothy?" said the maid. She knew Dorothy too well to even look her amusement.

"Certainly; I am sending a note to the Princess — a real, live Princess, Belinda; the Spanish one who came to Washington last night — and I want you to go to the hotel with it, and fetch me an answer."

"Oh, Miss Dorothy!" exclaimed Belinda a good deal startled, "do you really mean it? Had n't you better let one of the men servants carry it for you?"

"No," said Dorothy decidedly, "I want you to go, because, don't you see, most probably you will get a good look at her, when you deliver the note, and that will be a great chance for you. I've planned it all out. And oh! I forgot one thing. You are to go first to mamma's florist on Fourteenth Street and leave this order," and Dorothy took a paper from her desk; "when he gives you the box of flowers you are to take them with you and hand them to the Princess with my note. Now be sure and get it all straight, because it 's a most particular occasion, I assure you."

Belinda took the order and the note addressed in Dorothy's own childish hand to

"Her Most Royal Highness, the Princess Eulalia." Then, down in the corner of the envelope was written, "These, in haste!" — a reminiscence of some mediæval story which Phylis had told her. But Belinda was so accustomed to doing all manner of quaint errands for Dorothy that she merely concluded this was only a new freak, and as she was by no means averse to seeing the royal personage about whom the whole town was speculating, she dressed herself as she was told and left the house.

An hour later Dorothy danced into her mamma's room, her large hazel eyes full of pleased excitement, and her whole little person fairly bristling with delight. "Oh, mamma, mamma!" she cried, "just see what I've got! A note from her own dear beautiful self, and I'm to go and see her, most immediate, at twelve o'clock, and I'll take Belinda with me of course, and I don't want the carriage, mamma, unless you think it's really necessary when you're calling on a real, live Princess," and Dorothy, breathless, brought up beside her astonished mother.

"Why, Dorothy, my child, what have you been about?" said Mrs. Winship.

"This is my note," said Dorothy, handing

her a sheet of paper. "I blotted it and so I made a fresh copy — and I looked out every single word in the big dictionary down in papa's study, — I did truly, — and Belinda took it for me, and here 's the answer," and she laid a note, written on heavy white paper with the royal arms of Spain at its head, in her mother's lap.

This is the note Mrs. Winship read: —

"My dear Princess, — I don't know if you take much interest in little American girls, and maybe you have never even heard of me. It is the wish of my heart to see you, and I want to ask you if you will let me come for just a minute. If you are busy or do not want me for any other reason, I shall not be hurt, for every one says you are sweet and kind, and I am sure you love children. Will you please put these few roses near you in your own room?

"If you say I may come to see you I shall be the happiest little girl in the whole world. I send you my love.

"Ever your friend,

"Dorothy Winship."

Mrs. Winship let the note drop in her lap. "Why, Dorothy," she said, in pleased surprise, "what a nice little letter! How did you ever think of it?"

"Oh, but read the answer," cried Dorothy; and she looked over her mother's shoulder to have the pleasure of seeing it again with her own eyes.

"The Infanta Eulalia will see the little American girl with much pleasure at twelve o'clock this morning to thank her for her pretty little letter and the beautiful roses."

"Is n't that just lovely!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"It is most kind and gracious!" said her mother, "and of course you can go. But take Belinda and the carriage, because there may be a crowd outside the hotel. What sort of flowers did you send, Dorothy?"

"Oh, American Beauties," said the child; "they seemed to me the most royal looking; those great big ones, the same as you have for your dinners, mamma. Good-by, I must run and dress to go."

Mrs. Winship indulged in a hearty laugh as soon as Dorothy was out of hearing.

"Royal, indeed," said she, "with American Beauty roses at five dollars apiece! But the dear little soul will have the full enjoyment of it, and she deserves it for writing that pretty letter." From which it will be seen that Meta was the same generous, sympathetic heart that she was in the old days when we used to know her; prosperity and happiness had never hardened her as, alas! they harden so many.

As it was Saturday Phylis was able to keep her mischievous wager with Teddy; and among the crowd surrounding the hotel where the Infanta lodged, she and Penelope planted themselves at twelve o'clock. Vermont Avenue from H to I Streets was full of spectators; for drawn up along the curbstone at each side of the avenue were mounted troopers in the familiar blue and yellow, with Captain Ferguson and Teddy at the side of the waiting carriage which, drawn by four bay horses, stood ready for the Princess's use. Her Royal Highness did not keep them waiting very long; for just as Phylis had made sure that Teddy saw her (though how she did it Penelope never could find out, for to all appearances Teddy maintained the entire immovability of a soldier

on duty), the door of the hotel opened and the Secretary of State appeared with a tall, slender lady, who bowed and smiled very pleasantly in response to the cheer with which the spectators greeted her, and in another second the Infanta entered her carriage, the troopers swung into line, and with a dash the cortège was off to the White House, leaving Phylis and Penelope waving their handkerchiefs and clapping their hands with true girlish enthusiasm.

"Oh, Phylis, Phylis," cried a familiar voice; and Dorothy, panting with excitement, caught hold of her hand; "where *do* you think I 've been? You 'll never guess; I 've been with Belinda to call on the Princess. Belinda, tell Sanders to bring the carriage to Mrs. Gray's; I 'll walk over there," and Dorothy seized the two girls, almost too excited to tell a coherent story.

"When I got there," she went on, after explaining about her note and its answer, "we waited for about five minutes, in the Princess's own parlor, and then she came in with another lady who spoke English. But the Princess held out her hand, — I was just dropping a little courtesy, you know, — and she said, 'Is this the little girl who wrote

the letter? I will her embrace,' and she kissed me on my cheek, and said something in Spanish, and the other lady smiled and said to me, 'The Princess did not know you were so young,' and then the Princess said in French, '*Ah, comme elle est belle!*' and I got quite red, and managed to say that I would speak French, if she preferred, as I could do it easily, and the Princess said that her little boys spoke French and English too, and the English much better than she did. Then she asked me my name, and I told her, and I said my mamma was to meet her at dinner to-morrow, and she said, 'I will tell your mamma that her sweet little girl makes me think of my own children.' And then I said, quite slowly, 'Will your Royal Highness permit me to take my leave,' but she laughed and caught me up in her arms and kissed me again, and I could n't help it, Phylis, but I just forgot, and I said, 'Oh, you dear, beautiful, real Princess, it 's just like a fairy tale!' and then I was so ashamed that I flew out of the room, and Belinda after me, and Belinda says the Princess was so pleased that she clapped her hands as I ran away."

"Your début before royalty was certainly

a howling success," laughed Phylis, for Dorothy's naïve story was irresistible. "What color are her eyes, Dorothy? I could n't get close enough to see."

"They are soft brown," said Dorothy.

"And her hair is light and her skin so fair," said Penelope, whose untutored republican soul enjoyed the episode immensely. "I don't think she looks Spanish one bit."

"She 's a Spanish blonde," said Phylis, "and papa says they are the most beautiful of all. Dorothy, will you come in to lunch with us?"

"No, thank you," said Dorothy, "the carriage is waiting and mamma will be anxious to hear of my visit, so good-by, dear Phylis, and I 'll bring the Princess's note to school on Monday to show you and the other girls."

Penelope and Phylis went in to their lunch, but before that meal was ended a large box bearing Phylis's name arrived from the florist.

"Apparently the Infanta is not the only one," quoth Phylis, tearing it open in delighted expectancy; "somebody 's mistaken me for mamma," — as a huge bunch of mignonette and pink sweet peas met her gaze —

"and here 's a card," pouncing on it— "Oh!"

"From whom?" said her father, who happened to be lunching at home that day.

"It 's only Teddy," said Phylis, with cheeks that rivaled the pink flowers. "He made a sort of wager with me, papa."

"No pun intended," said her father slyly, as he took the bouquet in his hand. Phylis hesitated; for one second the new-born consciousness of maidenhood forbade the confidence; then she looked bravely up and put the card in her father's hand. He glanced at it, and his always boyish teasing laugh sounded in her ears as she picked up both box and card and ran away upstairs.

For on the card naughty Teddy had written, "For my sweet P."

CHAPTER XI.

YALENSIS VS. TURNOVERS.

Gerald Gray did not go home for the Easter holidays. The vacation was short, and Charley Gardner begged for him in Boston, so his mother consented to his remaining in New England, as she had promised him to take a large party of young people for Commencement at Yale and also to New London at the time of the inter-collegiate races. For Gerald was the "Varsity stroke" this year, and Phylis vowed that whatever else failed she must be there to wear the blue ribbon in honor of dear old Yale.

But Gerald's vacation plans had to be altered, for he had hardly arrived in Boston when Charley was taken with typhoid fever; and as he was seriously ill, Gerald telegraphed Miss Debby for permission to give her the benefit of his society for a few days at the old Massachusetts homestead, and started almost directly on receipt of her cor-

dial assenting reply. Gerald had hearty regard for Miss Debby, and bethought himself that in the extreme quiet of her home he might put in a little "grind," which would stand him in good service after returning to college and give him more time for practice with the boat's crew without endangering his class standing. It was rather vexing to give up Boston gayety and the dances and the pretty girls, but Gerald was a bit of a philosopher, and would not allow himself to be homesick for Washington, as he sped along on the fast train which was taking him to Miss Debby's.

Philosophy is sometimes rewarded in a way one little expects; and certainly as the puffing locomotive drew up for a brief two minutes, and Gerald swung himself off the platform, and walked across the tiny station, portmanteau in hand, when he found a pretty phaeton, with a gray horse, standing behind the building, while inside the carriage, with delighted welcome beaming in her eyes, sat Penelope, he felt Fate was kinder than he deserved!

"What star did you fall from?" cried Gerald as he bounded in beside her, dexterously avoiding the pretty skirt as he did so.

"I had no idea you were in this part of the country, and Phylis never wrote me."

"I came at very short notice," said Penelope, flicking the horse with her whip, as they drove off. "Aunt Debby seemed rather lonely, and Mrs. Gray had an opportunity to send me in charge of some friends going through to Boston, so I packed up in two hours, and here I am for a few days only, as the party pick me up upon the return trip to Washington."

"How particularly jolly, and what luck for me," said Gerald; "you can give me all the home news. And how are you, yourself? I think you 've grown round and rosy."

"Not much round," said Penelope, being quite unconscious how rosy she was at the moment. "I don't believe I 've gained a pound in a year! What an imagination you must have!"

"Not I," said Gerald. "Phylis does that sort of thing for the family. Where did Aunt Debby get that horse? Is this your trap?"

"Yes," said Penelope, "and the horse is a very recent purchase, for I am only driving him for the first time to-day and I am by no means sure of him either."

"There 's Aunt Debby," said Gerald suddenly, as they turned the corner and came down the lane. "Dear soul! I wonder if she has remembered the turnovers."

"Turnovers?" said Penelope, looking mischievous; "apple-pie to-night for supper. The turnovers are at present made by me; and as I think Aunt Debby's pie beats them, perhaps you won't want my turnovers."

"Don't you be too sure," said Gerald. "Have you the faintest conception of a collegiate's appetite, especially when he 's been absent from turnovers and such toothsome dainties for months? Hurrah, Aunt Debby, here 's your 'other boy,'" and he flung his arms around the spinster's waist and kissed her heartily.

"I certainly am glad to see you," said Aunt Debby, inspecting him carefully; "you do favor your father more 'an I ever thought you would. It 's real clever of you, Gerald, to come and see me, and I appreciate it. Lucky Penelope happens to be here, otherwise you might have found it sorter lonesome with only me and an occasional call from Abijah Bartlett."

"So Penelope appears in the light of a reward of merit — if I needed such a thing,"

— said Gerald, with a mischievous glance in the maiden's direction. But she pretended not to hear him, and they all went into the parlor, where, by the window, in his usual rocking chair, sat the Reverend Abijah himself, serene and placid as ever. The years seemed to leave as little trace on him as on Miss Debby; and Gerald, who remembered seeing him when a little lad, wondered if he had made a compact with Dame Nature to keep him middle-aged forever.

"There 's nothing like New England hills for making time stand still," said Gerald, shaking hands. "Why, when I look at you, sir, and at Aunt Debby's apple-blossom cheeks, I begin to believe that the fountain of youth dwells near Monadnock Mountain."

"Go along with your nonsense," said Aunt Debby, bridling a little, with a side glance at the Reverend Abijah to see how he appreciated the joint compliment. "Your father all over! None of your wheedling ways with me, Master Jerry, though as you were born with 'em I don't know as I feel called upon to try and make you over on any other pattern."

"Thank you, ma'am," retorted Gerald, who

always kept up a war of words with her. "I would n't mind being 'done over' on a New England loom."

"Your father has n't let you forget your forbears," said the Reverend Abijah. "I knew your grandfather, Judge Gray, and he was a credit to any part of this land, but most of all to Litchfield Hills, where he was born and reared and where they are proud of him to this day. I came from Goshen; and though my father moved to Winchester when I was a lad, I spent many pleasant, happy days in Connecticut."

"I have been told that the people of a hill country retain a more vivid affection for their homes than those of the lowlands," said Gerald.

"True, my lad," said the minister, looking gratified; "but speaking of our finding the fountain of youth in this locality reminds me of an old gentleman who lived in Litchfield, and had been born and reared there. I was talking to him one day about his age; he was then upwards of ninety-seven, and was one of the three oldest men in the township. 'Ah, Abijah,' he said gravely, 'I am getting on, I am getting on; but I have made the subject of age some-

what of a study, and it appears to me that the critical period of a man's life is from ninety-nine to one hundred.' "

Gerald burst into a hearty laugh. "We 'll have to wait some time for it," said he. "Aunt Debby, have I your permission to remove the dust from my person and make ready for supper, as I hear most encouraging sounds from the direction of the dining-room? "

The spring was earlier than usual that year in New England, and during the few days of Gerald's stay at Miss Debby's he and Penelope found plenty of excursions to fill up their time; they took one day to explore part of Monadnock Mountain, and another for Deerfield River, where they went by train, and selected a convenient rock outside the town for lunch, which they brought with them in a basket of sufficient size to content even Gerald's appetite. And their friendship grew apace; Gerald had many a tale to tell of the college scrapes and fun, beside the never-flagging interest in the boat race, in which Penelope shared his enthusiasm; and she listened with eager ears to a vivid and particular history of every man who composed that most important of

all bodies to an undergraduate, the crew of the inter-collegiate race. This year, too, bid fair to be an unusually exciting contest, as Harvard had carried off the championship the previous year, and Yale was sternly resolved to regain the colors if muscle and training could do it.

"Aunt Debby," said Gerald at breakfast, the day before he was to start for New Haven, "I think that in one respect I've been badly treated under this hospitable roof; here have I been hungering for days with a still unsatisfied hunger, and I appear quite likely to leave you with it still gnawing at my vitals. I would n't have believed you capable of it," and Gerald wagged his head solemnly at the puzzled spinster.

"What is the boy talking about?" demanded she, while Penelope smiled demurely from behind the coffee-pot.

"It 's turnovers," remarked Gerald solemnly. "Not one has graced this bountiful and groaning table since I crossed your threshhold. Every morning have I risen saying hopefully, 'they will surely appear to-day,' and each night retired to my couch in gloomy disappointment, a state of mind provocative of indigestion and nightmare."

"How you do go on," said Aunt Debby, much diverted. "Land sakes! why did n't you say so before, without all that rigamarole? And of all things, when I 've got to go to the mothers' meeting this morning in the village (though, as I did mention to Abijah Bartlett, what in the world I 'm doing being vice-president in a meeting of that kind is beyond me to find out!), and Hannah, though she is a passably good cook, don't run to turnovers, — they take a light hand and a quick fire, — why, Gerald, I don't see how in the world I 'm ever going to get time to make 'em before dinner."

"If a light hand is necessary, ma'am," said mischievous Gerald, "why not let Penelope try it?"

"That 's a fact," said Aunt Debby in a relieved voice. "Penelope, you had first-rate luck with the last batch, only you must be careful and not let 'em bake too hard in the first of it, remember."

"Yes, Aunt Debby," said Penelope. "It takes a good while to peel and core the apples, Gerald; so if I make the turnovers for you, we can't take the drive we were planning."

Gerald's face fell, and Penelope felt she had punished him properly.

"You can just as well take the ride this afternoon," said Aunt Debby, who could n't bear to have Gerald's plans broken up. "I 'm going down to the mothers' meeting with Mrs. Rogers, and sha'n't take the phaeton out at all, and you 'll have plenty of time before the train starts, if Gerald will do his packing this morning."

"Oh, that won't take long," replied Gerald, stealing a glance at Penelope. "Thank you ever so much, Aunt Debby. Shall I walk over with you to Mrs. Rogers' gate?" and fetching his cap, he waited until the spinster had arranged her bonnet strings to her satisfaction, and they went off together.

About half an hour after, Penelope went into the kitchen, where Hannah was raking out the fire in the huge brick oven which had been built into the house, and was, with its equally ancient companion, the old well (also inside in the back kitchen), the joy and pride of Aunt Debby's heart. Hannah looked over her shoulder as Penelope entered.

"Miss Debby told me you were comin', an' I 've got the ice water, an' the flour, an' the apples, an' the pans all settin' on the table," said she; "an' if you 'll just have an eye to

this 'ere fire I 'll run over to the laundry, and get Mr. Gerald's collars, an' be back quicker 'n you can say Jack Robinson."

"Did you take those collars to the laundry?" said Penelope. "Aunt Debby will never forgive you."

"What she does n't know will never cause her trouble," said Hannah shrewdly. "You know I can't put that 'ere finish on 'em, and bless you! Mr. Gerald 's too fine a young man not to be well 'turned out,' as you call it. I 'll be back before it 's time to put them turnovers in," and off whisked Hannah out of the back gate.

Penelope rolled up her sleeves and tied on her white apron. She had pretty white arms and dimpled hands, and, truth to tell, she rather hated to plunge them into the flour; but as every bit of it had to be sifted, she went straight at her work with an air of determination, and was progressing finely with the second sifting when the latch of the kitchen door was lifted and Gerald's merry face peeped in.

"Go away!" said Penelope, raising the dredging box playfully; "you 'll only interrupt the proceedings. I thought you were packing."

"That 's all done," said Gerald easily, as he closed the door behind him. "I always have wanted to be initiated into the mysteries of apple-turnovers, and now 's my chance."

"Much good a lesson would do you," retorted Penelope with an air of fine scorn. "I thought you said last night you had a tough bit of Greek to look over."

"So I have," said Gerald, "but I 'll do that in the cars on the way."

"Well, then," said Penelope, making a virtue of necessity, "you can sit down and peel and core these apples. Hannah has gone on an errand, and if you really want to help me you can do that."

"Of course I will," answered Gerald, drawing up a chair at the opposite side of the table, and seizing the bowl and knife.

"Wait a second," said Penelope, shaking her hands dry of the flour; "you will certainly ruin that swell suit of clothes; open that drawer — no, the one in the table close by you — here, I 'll come," and suiting the action to the word, she flew around to his side and pulled a small tablecloth out of the now open drawer.

"Now sit still while I cover you up,"

said she, as she threw the cloth over his shoulders, "and if I can find a pin I 'll fasten it around your neck. There!" standing back and surveying him with great satisfaction and laughing eyes; "now you look quite business-like and proper;" and back she went to the flour.

"Well!" said Gerald, after watching her for a few seconds, during which interval he was endeavoring to peel a whole apple without breaking the paring, "is that the way you make puff paste? I thought you kneaded it."

"Kneaded it!" echoed Penelope. "We knead bread, sir, not turnovers."

"What did Aunt Debby mean, then, by a light hand?" said Gerald.

"With a spoon," said Penelope briefly, as she stirred briskly away.

"Penelope," said Gerald softly, laying down a second apple to keep the first company, "are you sorry I 'm going away?"

"Sorry?" said Penelope, opening her eyes with a very neat pretense of surprise. "It won't be so very long until June, you know."

"It will be very long to me," said Gerald,

with a tender inflection in his always musical voice.

"Will it?" said Penelope, biting her lip, and planting a good-sized piece of lard in the centre of her bowl. "I shall have to study hard when I go back, because you know I am only to have this year at Mrs. Paulding's, and I must make the most of it, Aunt Debby says."

"And then I suppose you will 'come out' and be a full-fledged young lady, and look quite disdainfully down upon a Yale student like me?" said Gerald.

"Look down!" and Penelope's smile almost covered her blush. "I shall have to grow a good deal before I can ever look down on your inches."

Gerald tried to catch her eye, but she was apparently intent on the turnovers, so he abandoned that tack and flew round to leeward immediately.

"Penelope, I want you to promise me the first three dances at the commencement ball; will you?"

"To be sure," said Penelope, so pleased by this mark of favor in a dancer of Gerald's acknowledged grace that she raised her eyes and looked at him.

"And," said Gerald, dropping the apples as he met her gaze, "will you promise me something else, Penelope?"

"I don't know," faltered Penelope, with crimson cheeks, "perhaps" —

"Will you promise not to forget me?" whispered Gerald, just beneath his breath; and there is no telling what more he might have said or Penelope answered, if there had not suddenly at that very instant arose a big blaze from the roaring brick oven which caused them to drop both bowl and knife and rush toward it as Hannah opened the kitchen door and came in.

"For mercy sake!" began Hannah, pulling out a damper here and closing another there, "what are you thinking of, Miss Penelope? Them turnovers will scorch to pieces in such a fire as that. But, law, I don't see no turnovers in there."

"I have n't finished them yet, Hannah," said Penelope, flying back to her pastry. "Would you mind hurrying a little with those apples, Gerald, for if you don't we won't get done in time."

"Humph," ejaculated Hannah, with a shrewd guess at the situation, "I reckon I 'd better help you, Mr. Gerald; you ain't much used to peeling apples."

"Yes I am," said Gerald gayly, catching encouragement from Penelope's burning cheeks. "Here, Hannah," and he threw an apple paring which curled around her head and fell on the floor.

"What are you all about?" said Aunt Debby's voice as she marched in. "Those turnovers don't appear to be baked yet."

"Penelope was giving me lessons in making them," quoth Gerald, with mischief in his eyes, as he rose.

"Take off that tablecloth," said Aunt Debby; "you do look a figure in it. And what earthly use can the knowledge of how to make turnovers do you, Gerald Gray, at Yale College?"

"Never know what you're coming to, ma'am," said Gerald. "I might have to be cook for the Club yet; eh, Penelope?" But Penelope went on rolling turnovers, and refused to answer.

CHAPTER XII.

PHYLIS GIVES LESSONS IN PHOTOGRAPHY.

"ANITA," said Mrs. Redmond, "I wish I could get your attention for five minutes. I don't know what to make of you lately; you don't seem one bit like yourself."

It was a beautiful afternoon, and yet Anita sat cowering over the fireplace in Mrs. Redmond's sitting-room, apparently indifferent to everything outside. She was sitting in an armchair, her feet tucked under her silken petticoat, her arms over her head, gazing out into space with half-somnolent eyes.

"What did you say, Aunt Rhoda?" she asked with a start, coming back within reach of every-day life. "No, I 'm not going out this afternoon."

"Then it 's time you did," said her aunt sharply. "I don't know what 's come over you since the day of the garden party. If you don't feel well, say so, and I 'll send for Dr. McPherson. If you do feel well,

and it 's only laziness and disappointment, why, just get up and go out, or go over to town with me."

"Disappointment," said Anita, dropping her arms, and the slow sparkle lighting her eyes, which was always a danger signal of temper; "what do you mean? What have I to be disappointed about?"

"Well, I did n't exactly mean that," said Mrs. Redmond, with a recollection of the hysterical evening still fresh in her memory. "Perhaps I should say discontented; though what on earth you have to be discontented about here, with the Major and I both doing all we can for you, is more than I know. However, I am accustomed to ingratitude, and I suppose I ought to expect nothing else, even from my own flesh and blood."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Anita. "I suppose I need a 'spring tonic.' That was what Aunt Emily always gave me at this time of the year."

"You will have to have something, or else tell me what 's preying on your mind," said Mrs. Redmond. "Shall I ask Teddy Frost to dinner this evening to cheer you up?"

"Just as you like," said Anita with an

air of indifference; but, pressing the nails of one small white hand into the palm of the other, "I think Jack Haven is a good deal more fun."

"Do you?" said her aunt, eyeing her keenly. "Well, I'll go and tell the Major to ask them both. There is Teddy Frost now," as she passed the window; "and if here is n't the Grays' carriage full; I wonder where they are going," and Mrs. Redmond bustled out on the steps just in time to bow to the party as they drove past, and to see Teddy jump up in the drag and join them as they hurried down the avenue towards Arlington.

Anita darted across the room to the window that commanded a view of the entrance to the gates, and watched the drag go through them.

"I believe it is that little schoolgirl," she muttered half aloud. "I hate her, and I almost hate him, too. How dare he speak to me like that! Oh, dear! here comes Aunt Rhoda again;" and quick as a flash the girl darted back and resumed her listless attitude in the armchair.

"They 've gone to Arlington to take some photographs, so Jack Haven says; Phylis

Gray sent over her camera and other apparatus this morning; and he can come to dinner to-night, but Teddy Frost can't."

"How do you know that?" said Anita; "you did n't ask him, did you?"

"No, because he had driven away by the time I got out there; but Haven says that Teddy has to be at the office this evening with the Colonel and the Paymaster auditing the Company's accounts; and as there 's a package of vouchers come in from regimental headquarters he has to look them over without loss of time. Come, Anita, run up and dress, and go over to town with me. It 's a lovely day, and the fresh air will do you good."

"No, thanks," said Anita sullenly.

"Surely you are not going to sit here all the afternoon, moping in the house?"

"I 'll get dressed presently," said Anita, "and go in to see Mrs. Goddard, or out on the grounds, if that will please you. But don't worry over me, Aunt Rhoda; I am quite able to take care of myself and the house until you come back from town. Is the Major going with you?"

"No," said Mrs. Redmond. "He is already there, and I am to pick him up at

the Army and Navy Club at half-past five. Oh! I must tell the servants that Haven is coming to dinner," and Mrs. Redmond left the room for her kitchen.

Meantime, Phylis, Penelope, and Teddy, with Mrs. Gray and Dorothy, were walking around the slopes of beautiful Arlington, finding views and picturesque places where Phylis could set up her camera, which was carried from point to point for her by Somers, Teddy's orderly. Phylis had made quite a study of photography, and did remarkably good amateur work, having a room in the fourth story at home especially arranged for her to develop her own pictures, although it must be confessed that sometimes when she was very busy at school or otherwise, or impatient to see the result, she took her negatives to a professional by way of saving time, and had him finish the pictures for her.

Teddy, who had done a good deal of such work also, out on the frontier, was amusing himself this afternoon by pretending to know nothing about it, in order that he might enjoy the pleasure of hearing Phylis's animated instructions, delivered in sober earnest, she not having the smallest idea of his prank.

So they strolled about for some time, Somers carefully conducting the camera and remaining at a respectful distance. Dorothy and Penelope discovered some pretty wild flowers outside the fence which guarded the government lines, and nothing would do but that they must climb it and procure the flowers for themselves. So Mrs. Gray sat in the drag to wait for the girls, and finally Phylis announced that she wanted to photograph the post.

"Well, why not?" said Teddy. "Marjorie, if you want to call on Mrs. Goddard, Phylis and I will walk back, and get some good views on the way, and then join you at the Colonel's."

"Very well," said Mrs. Gray. "Penelope," calling her, "will you and Dorothy drive over with me or walk back with Phylis and Teddy?"

"Don't any one wait for us," called back Penelope across the fence. "I know the way, and we 'll follow in about five minutes; I 'll take good care of Dorothy." So Mrs. Gray drove off, and Teddy and Phylis strolled leisurely in the direction of the post.

"You don't know what a pleasant afternoon this is for me," said Phylis. "I am so

busy at school now ; our examinations begin this week, and nearly every spare moment I have is given to those lessons. It 's really an awful grind. Papa makes me take a ride every day on Kaiser, and that 's all the fun I get, though I must say I 've missed you, for Thomas riding stiffly behind me is hardly an enlivening companion."

"I was, too, sorry to miss the rides," said Teddy, in genuine regret ; "but I 've been so unusually busy at the office for a week. You see there 's a lot of regimental business for me to attend to just now, and besides, Burroughs, one of my brother officers out at Russell, is in a bit of a scrape, and I am trying to help him out of it, so that 's why I have n't been over to ride with you."

"Don't think of it for a moment," said Phylis. "Of course I knew you could n't get away."

"I hope you did understand," said Teddy in a relieved tone; "for I would n't disappoint you, Phylis, for anything in the world."

"There 's one thing you must n't fail to do," said Phylis, avoiding his eye, "and that is to keep your promise to go on for the races at New London. We are all going, you know, and are to stop with the

Winships and to see the races from their yacht."

"I would n't miss it," said Teddy enthusiastically. "I 'll pin all my faith and wager all my money on Gerald. Is n't that what you want me to do?"

"Of course, but I don't know about the wagers, Teddy."

"They won't be heavy enough to break me," said he, smiling down at her. "You won't mind a few flowers, will you?"

"Not if they are as lovely as those you sent me last week," said Phylis, giving him the blush the naughty fellow was watching for. "Oh, Teddy, you must n't tell, but I 'm going in for a prize at school."

"Then you 'll get it," said Teddy with conviction.

"Do you really mean it?" asked Phylis.

"Of course I do; 'nothing venture, nothing have.'"

"Is that your motto?" said Phylis.

"Yes," said Teddy, with mischief in his voice, "when I 'm going in for a prize."

"Teddy," said Phylis, stopping short and surveying the gate just before them, "I think we can get some lovely pictures right here; there 's the Commandant's house, and

the barracks, and I can get such a nice focus from this very point."

"Little witch!" muttered Teddy to himself, as he turned back to meet Somers with the camera, and proceeded to set it up at the right point. "Now, Phylis, see if this be correct for you."

So Phylis threw the cloth over her head, and then Teddy had to take a peep, and they argued the point as to whether a few feet east or a few feet west were best, and then they took two more pictures, and Teddy insisted that his quarters were much more imposing from the front, just as Phylis snapped the cover down, thereby ending the dispute and carrying her point at the same moment.

"I am going to take your quarters from the lawn," she said, "if you think mamma will not be tired waiting for us. What hour is it, Teddy? I have no idea of the time."

"It 's just five o'clock," said Teddy, "and drill is at a quarter of six. I shall have time to see that one picture taken, and get into my clothes before it. Take the camera, Somers. Oh, here come the laggards," as Penelope and Dorothy appeared, breathless, with hands full of wild flowers, in the gate

beside them. "Well, truants, are you ready to go home?"

"Why, it 's not time yet," said Penelope; "beside, Mrs. Gray promised we should stay for the drill."

"There, that 's all right," said Teddy; "come over to the lawn; Phylis is going to take another picture there."

They all trooped into Mrs. Goddard's parlor, a merry party, and found not only Mrs. Gray, but Anita, beautifully dressed, and talking with animation, somewhat foreign to her usual manner.

"I can't shake hands," said Phylis, as Anita came toward her, "for the plates have soiled mine so badly. Will you come out on the lawn and be photographed?"

"With pleasure," said Anita. "Are they all coming?"

"We must have Mrs. Goddard," said Phylis, "and I want to take Teddy's quarters — oh, they are the other half of your house, are they not?"

"Semi-detached villas," said Teddy, before Anita could reply, "they 're only joined in the back, and are much more imposing from the lawn; where will you have the camera, Phylis?"

Out on the lawn flew Phylis, and in a trice had her instrument in position, with Mrs. Goddard, her mother, the two girls, and Anita all posed on the steps. A sight, a click, and she announced it was all done.

"Oh, Phylis," cried Dorothy, much impressed, "you certainly are a prize photographer."

"What does the child mean?" said Phylis, bringing her camera to bear on Teddy's quarters as he stood by her side. "I'm not a prize anything, Dorothy; I'm much more of a pickle."

"I should never think of calling you a pickle," said Teddy quite soberly.

"Would n't you? That 's what mamma used to call me; papa made it much prettier; he used to say" —

"Sweet pickle," said Teddy softly in her ear. "Don't you think I put it better? Jove! I've just twelve minutes to get into my togs; I'll see you as I come down on my way to the drill;" and Teddy vanished inside his own door.

Up the staircase, two steps at a time, he flew, dashed through Jack Haven's sitting-room and into his own bedroom without stopping. And then he brought up in front

of his desk and positively gasped with dismay; for there before his eyes was the drawer which he had left locked, wide open. Letters and papers were scattered on the desk and a chair near by; Teddy made one bound and ran his hand far back in the nearly empty drawer.

"Gone!" he ejaculated blankly; "and the letter! Good Heavens, I hope that is safe!"

Ten minutes later, as Phylis sat alone in the drag at Mrs. Goddard's door waiting for her mother and the girls to drive over to the parade ground for the drill, Teddy touched her arm.

"Here is a posy I had for you, Phylis," he said quietly, giving her a bunch of sweet peas. "I am sorry I can't come over to-night; regimental business prevents."

"Teddy!" Phylis almost cried out in alarm, for Teddy's face was white and drawn, and his brows set sternly. "What is the matter? Oh, do tell me. You frighten me!"

"I don't mean to, dear," he said very low, with an attempt at a smile most unlike his cheery, happy self. "I 'm in no end of

worry; but don't trouble, I'll come out all right. Good-by, good-by;" and leaving a kiss on the little slim hand, Teddy sprang down and disappeared in the direction of the parade grounds.

CHAPTER XIII.

A KNOTTY PROBLEM.

THE Commandant sat in his office reading over some papers with earnest attention. Opposite him at the table sat Teddy, and at his side Major Redmond, and all three were looking extremely disturbed and puzzled.

"I confess I do not understand it," said the Colonel, dropping the papers and leaning back in his chair. "You certainly received the vouchers, Frost? There is no mistake as to that?"

"No, sir," said Teddy; "they came on Wednesday afternoon; I unlocked the mail-bag, as you had gone over to town. I was all alone in the office, but as I went across to the house I met Haven and told him they had come."

"Did you have the package in your hand?" asked the Colonel.

"No, sir; unfortunately, I had taken the vouchers with Burroughs's letter and put

them in the locked drawer of my desk as I went over to supper. I met Haven on the return trip. He had just come over from town, and went back there with me later that evening, as we both had an engagement."

"You should have delivered them to me, sir," said the Colonel somewhat sharply.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Teddy very respectfully, but with heightened color, "that would not have occurred to me, as I usually retain the vouchers until I deliver them to the paymaster."

"You are right, Frost," said the Colonel; "no need to beg my pardon, lad; I was too hasty. But after all, the loss of the vouchers, though it involves considerable loss of time and much red tape, is not so bad as the missing letter from Burroughs, which you tell me was a private matter."

"A private matter in a way sir," replied Teddy; "if it gets out just at present it may cause a regimental scandal. It was in regard to some charges about to be brought against Captain Atkinson" —

"Atkinson!" ejaculated the Major, in blank amazement, under his breath.

"Yes, Atkinson; and when I tell you that

it 's a deficit in the regimental accounts, with two other charges almost as bad, you will see how important that confidential letter is."

"Whew!" whistled the Major, while the Commandant was surprised into an ejaculation more forcible than polite. "Of course Burroughs's letter was non-official?"

"Entirely so," said Teddy. "We are intimate friends, and this was to ask me in regard to a matter which came directly under my notice while at Russell. But you can easily see that if any outsider got hold of the matter at this stage it would make a terrible complication, and I 'd sacrifice six months' pay rather than have had it happen."

"I see," said the Colonel slowly, "but who on earth could have any motive in stealing the papers? That 's the puzzle."

"Yes, sir," said Teddy with a sigh; "I can't tell whether it 's some friend of Atkinson's or enemy of mine, though I confess I do not know of anybody who I can fancy would play me such a scurvy trick."

"Nor I," said the Major with kindly warmth, which made Teddy look up gratefully; "you 're much too popular, Frost, for any such supposition;" and the Colonel

gave an assenting nod to the remark which completed the compliment. "Are you absolutely certain that the vouchers and letters are nowhere to be found in your quarters?"

"I am positive," said Teddy; "I have searched every available place. And beside you must remember that I had locked my drawer as well as the desk itself, and that I found it completely rifled of its contents, part of which were on a chair close at hand. I laid the vouchers on top of the letter; therefore I think the same hand took both, although what on earth anybody should steal the letter for I cannot imagine. On the other hand, why should any one who wanted Burroughs's letter take the vouchers also? It 's a knotty problem, and I have thought and thought until my head aches over the matter."

"Who was in your quarters to-day?" asked the Colonel.

"In the afternoon, sir? Not a soul, between three and five o'clock. I had gone out to Arlington and taken my orderly, Somers, with me to carry Miss Gray's camera (we were photographing some views in the cemetery), and Jack Haven was" —

"Haven!" exclaimed both officers in a breath.

"Why, Frost," said the Colonel, "have you forgotten that he is Atkinson's nephew?"

"No, sir," said Teddy vehemently, "nor have I forgotten that he is a gentleman as well."

"Steady, my boy," said the Major, laying a hand on Teddy's arm. "We have not accused him. But you must admit that the suspicion is natural, though we do not doubt Haven can readily clear himself. What were you going to say when we interrupted you a moment ago?"

"Only that Haven went in town — stay! I am not sure whether he left the house before I did; I certainly saw him come down on the porch as I drove away in Mrs. Gray's drag, and I suppose he went directly off. But I 'd as soon suspect myself as Jack of such a sneaking, miserable affair as this."

"He came in after drill and dined with us," said Major Redmond. "My wife said she had intended asking you also, Frost; but you had told Haven you were busy at the office to-night, and so she deferred her invitation."

"Jack knew I had to spend the evening

here," said Teddy. "I suppose we had best conduct this search very cautiously. It was such a knock-down blow to me that I thought it better to report to you at once, especially as we must have those vouchers by pay day."

"You 've done exactly right," said the Colonel. "And where the vouchers are the missing letter will no doubt be found. Try and find out the hours of Haven's coming and going, Frost, as you can very easily without exciting any remark, and we will talk this over again to-morrow;" and with a kindly nod the Commandant dismissed his adjutant, and Teddy walked slowly over to his quarters.

As he passed the Redmonds' door he heard Anita's voice singing, as she played a soft accompaniment on the piano; but he was in no mood for calling, so he went slowly up into his own room, and, lighting a cigar, sat down to think over the events of the day. But the more he thought the more utterly inexplicable appeared the whole matter. Who could have been able to gain entrance into his quarters except Haven? Was it possible that Captain Atkinson had in some way become aware of the sending of that

letter and had made it known to — pshaw! This was making a three-volume novel of it, and drawing too much upon imagination for facts. And Teddy struck a match, for his cigar had gone out; and as he threw the half-burned light away, it hit against something which sparkled for a second before the match died out.

"Hallo, what 's that?" said Teddy, getting up and walking in the direction of the glittering object. "Why it 's a half sleeve link — good heavens!" — and Teddy gazed with perfect consternation upon the tiny object under his foot. "How came it here?" went on Teddy, picking it up and eyeing it as if it were a dynamite bomb in disguise, "for that 's Jack's sleeve button by all that 's dreadful!"

He went back to the table and, laying it down under the gaslight, pondered gravely. It looked queer, certainly; from its position the link must have caught in something. "Ah, yes," said Teddy, springing up again, "here 's the other half, hanging on the claw of my desk. I wonder I did not see it this afternoon." The desk was an old one, with brass mountings, and evidently the sleeve link had caught in one of the claw-like

ornaments to the drawer and been broken as the owner's arm was hastily wrenched away. Teddy's brow grew graver and sadder; he vigorously repelled the idea of Jack Haven's being concerned in the matter, and yet what was he to conclude? As he sat, growing more anxious and worried every instant, he heard "good-night" exchanged on the walk below, and then Jack's quick step came bounding up the stairs.

"All by yourself, old man?" sung out Jack, as he came into their sitting-room. "I 'll be with you in a jiffy, as soon as I get into my smoking-jacket."

Teddy took up the broken sleeve link and thrust it into his pocket; he would wait and think before showing it to Jack.

"Tired?" said Jack, coming in and possessing himself of the extension chair, on which he stretched himself full length. "I thought you were in for an evening of it with the old man." "Old man," be it known, was the slang phrase for the Colonel among the youngsters. "Did he let you down easy?"

"About an hour and a half of it," said Teddy, shaking the ashes off his cigar and puffing away hard. "What have you been about all day?"

"Oh, I put in a couple of dinner calls, and took a walk with Miss Estelle Lawrence (pretty little girl, that, Teddy, though not a cut to your friend, Miss Gray), and came near being late for drill; I just made it by a brace of seconds, that 's all."

"What made you late, Jack?" asked Teddy; "too long a stroll with Miss Estelle?"

"Did n't get there early enough," said Jack; "ambulance went off without me."

"Why, you left the house before I did," said Teddy, "and I saw the ambulance standing at Ferguson's door as I jumped into Mrs. Gray's drag."

"So you did," said Jack; "but I was waylaid by Mrs. Redmond; and she 's had a fresh coat of paint put on her front door; and if I did n't go and run plump into it, and get the darned stuff all over one of my cuffs; so I had to come back and change it, and by the time I got into my coat again the ambulance had departed, and I had to march down the hill and catch the electric car at the bridge."

"There must be *some* mistake," groaned Teddy to himself, suspicion clutching hard at his soul. But Jack went on gayly.

"I 've had a jolly evening next door; that girl knows how to sing, eh, Teddy?"

"Yes," said Teddy, busy with his thoughts. Jack looked up at him, smiling.

"I told you I 'd go in for a 'fly' in that quarter," said he. "I 've been having a very good time lately. You don't mind, do you?"

"Heavens! no!" cried Teddy with emphasis, growing hot as he remembered his experience the day of the garden party. "Take care of yourself, Jack, that 's all."

"Oh, I 'm all right," said Jack with the easy carelessness born of many flirtations.

"Well, if you don't mind, I 'm going to turn in, for I 've been up so late for a week that I 'm beginning to feel rather seedy. By-by," and he sauntered off, whistling the air of Anita's last song.

As Jack closed the door between their rooms, Teddy took out the broken sleeve link and locked it up safely in a dispatch box.

"I won't believe it," he said to himself over again. "It is n't in Jack to sneak or thieve for the dearest relative he owns on earth. I 'll find this out some other way. If I had n't been so confoundedly silly as to

bring the vouchers and that letter over here, instead of leaving them in the office desk, this might not have happened, and I 'll have to take the blame until I discover the real offender." And then he walked up and down the room for the twentieth time, and finally pulled his easy chair out on the balcony at the back of the house, and finished his cigar there, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies before he finally turned in to bed.

The next week was a hard one for Teddy. Everything that human ingenuity could contrive was accomplished, but he was just as far from a solution of the theft, or from finding the perpetrator of it, on the seventh day as he had been on the first. It was very strange that no one should have seen or heard the entrance of the thief; and this was where the circumstances pointed clearest toward Jack Haven. Teddy questioned Somers, with, of course, no result, as Somers had been under his own eye all the afternoon; he even went to his laundress, fancying that perhaps she might have seen the exit or entry of the unknown into his quarters. But Mrs. Bridget O'Flaherty, who was the wife of the sergeant, declared that " sorra a

wan did she see beyont, and beside, sure, she niver tuk the clane clothes home until afther dark, whin Somers himself was there, an' not a livin' soul else about the premises." Poor Teddy was almost in despair, but never a word did he say to any one, not even the Major, as to the sleeve link. He felt so sure that Jack could and would eventually explain that incident that he could not bear to appear to implicate him in the matter by repeating it where it might deepen suspicion.

But, after all, Teddy was only human, and he did make one confidant, for all his resolves. He always dined on Sunday at the Grays', and this week, feeling particularly low in his mind, had a half-formed idea of sending his first excuse to Marjorie. But the unusual worry and mystery had given him an impatient longing for Phylis and her bright personality. Teddy had passed the Rubicon; he knew what he wanted now, and wondered, in most unusual fear and trepidation, whether he would ever gain the prize which hung so temptingly above his head.

Dinner was over and they drifted out on the doorsteps, Washington fashion (when the spring days come), and Phylis sat down

at the piano in the library and began to sing, in her fresh, clear soprano, the dear old-fashioned songs her father loved. Teddy fidgeted, there was no denying it; first he bestowed himself in a chair by Penelope, then he found a cushion at Marjorie's feet very comfortable; but at the end of a half-hour some visitors arrived, and in the little attendant bustle of their coming Teddy managed to slip quietly away to the library and into a chair just by the piano.

"Oh, Teddy!" said Phylis with a start, and coming abruptly back from her musical flight. "How did you get here so softly? I thought you were all out on the steps together."

"So we were," said Teddy; "but the Winships and Gordons appeared, and I ran away to you. You will be off so soon to New Haven and New London that I am afraid I won't see much of you until you return."

"Why, Teddy," said Phylis, "I thought it was all arranged that you were to come with us. Don't tell me that you 've changed your mind."

"I am of the same mind," said Teddy quietly, "but, Phylis, there are some cir-

cumstances which are not of my making that I fear will prevent my even joining you at New London, though I will make every effort to do so."

"Circumstances?" said Phylis, feeling a lump in her throat, and a childish inclination to cry from sheer disappointment. "Why, I thought your leave was all arranged and that you were going to Aunt Debby after our trip."

"But this is a matter which affects me seriously," said Teddy with a pained note in his voice entirely new to Phylis. "I am in the worst kind of a scrape, and through no fault of my own except carelessness. But there are times when carelessness becomes a crime," and Teddy heaved a big sigh.

"Tell me all about it," said Phylis, wheeling around on the piano stool and facing him with eyes so full of sympathy that Teddy told her the story of his difficulties then and there.

"You see I have n't been able to answer Burroughs's letter, and I know he is thinking me both unbusiness-like and neglectful," went on Teddy, after relating how letter and vouchers had disappeared. "I shall make a

clean breast of it when I do write, as I told Major Redmond to-day, and I keep hoping that each twenty-four hours may bring me some clew."

"But you have one," said Phylis, "the broken sleeve link. Teddy, somehow it seems to me it's best to be frank with a friend; that's what mamma always says to me. You need n't say a word to Mr. Haven about *your* loss, but what is there to prevent your asking him about his?"

"I believe you are right," said Teddy, his face lighting up. "Somehow I've been feeling that if I said a word to Jack about the sleeve link I must tell him the whole story, and you see it would n't take him a second to put two and two together and find out at once that suspicion was attached to him."

"Try it," said Phylis hurriedly, for there was a sound of laughter in the hall and the others were coming toward the library; "and, Teddy, don't be worried; I'm sure it will turn out all right;" and the trusting violet eyes looked up into his with a glance that made Teddy's heart bound as he stooped to pick up a song which had fallen from the piano to the floor.

Teddy had no more chance for speech of Phylis that evening, and after a short time made his farewell and was going away, when Mrs. Winship stopped him.

"Do not forget that you are due at New London race week, Mr. Frost," she said. "I am filling Montrose with a large house party, and we shall see the races from our own yacht."

Teddy hesitated; then he caught Phylis' eyes, with so much of wistful hope in them that he plucked up courage.

"I shall not be apt to forget it, Mrs. Winship, nor your gracious hospitality in thus including me. If the fortunes of the house of Gray (as represented by the Captain of the crew) hang on that race, I shall surely be there, unless prevented by some regimental business of unusual importance," and with a quick good-night, Teddy left the room and the house.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE LINK OF THE CHAIN.

"To Fort Meyer, Sanders," said Mrs. Winship to her footman as she stepped into her victoria early one morning.

The warm days had come, and it behooved her to take the drive early or else very late, and a dinner engagement would prevent her from going in the afternoon; therefore this morning trip.

Truth to tell, Meta was a trifle cross that morning, if anything so commonplace as being cross ever overtook her. Her sunny, even temperament was not much given to fretting, particularly over petty matters; but to-day she found herself confronted by a situation which was far from being agreeable to her. In making up her house party for "Montrose," her summer place at New London, she found, after consultation with her husband, that it was impossible not to include the Redmonds and Anita. Major Redmond was thoroughly charming, and he

and Meta were the best of friends; but Mrs. Redmond, for some unknown reason, had always chosen to antagonize Meta, and to a woman of her gracious and kindly temperament this attitude was particularly exasperating, especially as she felt that she had given Mrs. Redmond no cause for it. On the contrary, Meta had gone a good deal out of her way that past winter to be cordial and polite to Mrs. Redmond. That she was often bored by her would not have so much mattered, for Meta usually floated calmly above small annoyances; but Mrs. Redmond had so often made herself aggressively obnoxious to her that it was borne in upon Meta's mind that her action was intentional. Up to a certain point Meta was amiability itself; but her patience once exhausted, the offender was very sure to suffer, and in a way that was unmistakable.

As Mrs. Winship's carriage drove up to the Redmonds' door, Anita came flying down the steps. Anita was always on her best manners with Mrs. Winship, whom she honestly liked and admired.

"How lovely of you to come over this warm morning," said she, helping Meta to alight. "I'll run and tell Aunt Rhoda.

Oh! here she is," as Mrs. Redmond appeared in the hall, untying her white apron as she approached the front door.

"Why, Meta, good-morning," she said, meeting her guest on the steps. "I was out in the kitchen giving orders. I don't suppose you ever go into your kitchen, do you?"

"Not often," replied Meta good humoredly, shaking hands with her; "there are other things which Belinda cannot attend to and I must, so I usually relegate the kitchen and its necessary detail to her."

"You can't trust the very best of them," averred Mrs. Redmond solemnly; "they are bound to waste the butter, or give away the eggs, or have too much company running in. I could n't look the Major in the face and feel I had n't given the housekeeping my personal supervision. But then you don't feel that way."

"No," said Meta easily, ignoring the sting, "I 'm afraid I am rather derelict as to the kitchen."

"I should think anybody who could be would," said Anita. "Aunt Rhoda worries so over the monthly account books that life becomes a burden."

"I'd like to know where we'd be if I didn't," returned Mrs. Redmond, whose parsimony was such a well-known fact in the regiment that unkind people said she begrudged the Major even the five cents necessary for car fare. "Meta does n't appreciate what it is to live on an army officer's pay."

"But I thought you did n't?" remarked Meta, opening her eyes innocently. "You told me when I was in Omaha that your personal investments had turned out so well that you were realizing ten per cent. on them."

If there was anything on earth that Meta abominated and considered bad form, it was drawing comparisons as to one's worldly goods; and as that was a favorite source of complaint with Mrs. Redmond, she resented the parallel accordingly.

"Lucky Aunt Rhoda!" burst in Anita, much entertained. "I wish she'd give me the straight tip." But Mrs. Redmond, a little alarmed at the idea of having her private resources revealed, changed the subject.

"When do you leave the city, Meta?" she asked, "the Major told me last night that he thought you were going soon."

"We leave on Thursday," said Meta,

"and that brings me to the subject of my visit this morning. We are to have a house party at Montrose for the boat races; the Grays are coming, several people from New York, and a few bachelors just to help amuse the girls. Now, why can't you, Major Redmond, and Anita make our party complete and join us there at the time of the boat races?"

Mrs. Redmond's face changed. If there was anything that her secret soul longed for, it was the high-bred elegance of Meta's well-ordered household; and realizing what a vista of enjoyment this unexpected invitation opened to her, she allowed her face to relax into a prim smile.

"That's very, very kind of you, Meta. Of course it will be very pleasant for Anita and me, but I don't know about the Major" —

"Oh, I can't possibly excuse the Major," said Meta, to whom he was the only alleviation of the Redmond party, "and I am also expecting Teddy Frost, so we shall have quite a military contingent."

Anita, whose lowering brow had not been unseen by Meta, resumed her smiling exterior, much to that clever dame's amuse-

ment; for Meta had her own opinions as to the fair Anita's claim upon Teddy, and played her trump card with the certainty of taking the trick.

"Then you 'll come for a week?" she said, taking Anita's consent for granted; "and if you fancy yachting, you 'll get quite all you desire, for my husband is a born yachtsman, and there is nothing he likes better than a company of ladies on board the Psyche."

"What a pretty name for a yacht!" said Anita; "and thank you so much, dear cousin Meta, for including me."

"Here comes Major Redmond to ratify the compact," cried Meta, catching sight of him as he appeared on the walk outside, and waving her hand to him from the window. "I am here to capture you, one and all, for Montrose and race week."

"Of course we 'll come," answered the Major genially, giving both hands to Meta, for they were warm, close friends, and understood each other perfectly. "To be quite candid, Meta, I have been hoping for a glimpse of New London this year; I am a born New Englander and love the old land well, as you know."

"Then I shall not be content with only one visit," said Meta cordially. "This time my house party is chiefly for Marjorie and Rex. Marjorie would n't own it for worlds, but she is just as much excited over the races as Phylis and Penelope, and I believe Rex is nearly as bad."

"Why, what else can you expect when Gerald is the 'Varsity stroke?'" asked the Major. "We shall all have to go prepared to swing out the Blue."

"This being settled," asked Meta, rising, "I must go back to town, as I am so busy doing the last things before leaving, and we still have dozens of social engagements. You know I work hard."

"Work," echoed Mrs. Redmond, following her to the door; "if you ever accomplish anything beyond paying visits and going to dinners, receptions, and balls, I 'd like to know." Her acerbity of tone was so marked that the Major could not let it pass, especially as Meta's life was, as he well knew, anything but that of a social butterfly, although she never paraded the fact; so he said, half ruefully, half laughingly, as he handed her into the victoria, "I declare, Meta, I should think you would sometimes

get vexed with Rhoda when she speaks her mind."

"So I should," said Meta, laughing outright, "if it were not for my sense of humor." And then she realized the satire of her retort and nearly strangled with merriment as Mrs. Redmond, by way of making it better, remarked: —

"Oh, Meta and I always tell each other the truth, Major."

"Speak for yourself, Mrs. Redmond," said Meta, with a last roguish twinkle of her eyes toward the Major, as Sanders, to her great relief, jumped on the box and the carriage rolled away.

"It was awful in me," said Meta to herself, as she drove down the hill, "but flesh and blood cannot stand that woman. I am confident that sooner or later I shall grind her to powder — only, I don't want to hurt the Major."

Since leaving Phylis on Sunday night Teddy had come no nearer to solving the mystery of the stolen papers. A second letter had arrived from Burroughs; and Teddy, after consulting the Major, had decided to answer it, and his reply was lying on his office desk, sealed and stamped, ready to

mail, when the door of the room opened and Jack Haven entered.

"Hallo, Teddy, all alone?" said he, throwing himself into the Chief's chair. Jack always had a faculty for selecting the softest place, and a total lack of veneration which was often laughable. "What 's all this I hear about a big house party at New London entertained by Mrs. Winship? Lucky dog you are, to be bidden there; I wish I were."

"I wish you were," said Teddy kindly, "especially as you might go in my room, for I have a dismal presentiment that regimental work will keep me here, close tied."

"Regimental fiddlesticks," cried Jack. "Why, you don't have to be here until the first of the month, and that 's ten, twelve days off, you know."

"Thank you," said Teddy; he had a great affection for his junior, and for the hundredth time spurned the idea of his complicity in the matter of the missing letter. "Jack, you don't seem to me quite like yourself, lately; what 's to pay, eh?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Jack uneasily and avoiding his eye. "I 've had letters that bother me, and family affairs appear com-

plicated — hang it! And then, too, I 'm worried over a report I heard yesterday."

"About what?" asked Teddy, as Jack paused.

"Did you ever happen to hear" — and Jack lowered his voice a little as he shifted his chair nearer Teddy's desk — "did you ever hear that there was insanity in Miss Duncan's family?"

"Heavens, no," said Teddy; "who told you?"

"Mrs. Ferguson and the Captain were speaking of it last evening," said Jack, "and they seemed pretty sure of their facts, too. It came through the grandfather, and there is something queer and mysterious about her father, though exactly what it is no one seems to know."

"I don't believe it," said Teddy loyally. "Why, what a dreadful lookout for the poor girl!"

"Don't you think she 's — well, just a trifle queer?" asked Jack. Teddy flushed up; the recollection of the scene he had with Anita in the Major's study was fresh in his memory — he had heard of girls taking wild fancies — pshaw! that was nonsense.

"No, I don't," said Teddy; "a little flighty and excitable, perhaps, but lots of other girls are both."

"Teddy," said Jack soberly, "I believe I 'm a little bit gone on the fair Anita — and — well! it 's a derned uncomfortable feeling to think that perhaps she might n't be all right in her head, you know."

"You ridiculous boy," quoth Teddy, bursting into a hearty laugh, and, notwithstanding all his worries, catching the ludicrous side of Jack's being seriously in love with Anita. "Why, in the first place she 's a thorough-paced flirt, and you know you never stuck to the same girl for six months at a time, and what 's more, you have n't a penny to get engaged on — oh! shut up, Jack, what nonsense!"

"She 's been awfully nice to me," said Jack with a rueful face, for chaffing him was the sure remedy to effect a cure, as Teddy well knew, "and somehow I don't like to believe it."

"Neither would any one," said Teddy. "If you really want to know, Jack, write to your uncle, Captain Atkinson, at Russell. He was a great friend of Miss Duncan's aunt, with whom she stopped there, and I think he would be sure to know the facts."

"I will," said Jack, stretching his arms in a prolonged yawn, "more especially as I heard from him to-day — oh, bother that cuff button, where 's it gone to now?" and he jumped up out of his seat in hasty pursuit of the truant as it rolled into a crack by the door.

"Now 's my chance," said Teddy to himself. Then aloud, carelessly, as Jack came back, putting the button in his cuff, "One of your blue and white links, Jack?"

"No," said Jack. "I have n't had those on since" — and there he stopped short, and fumbled with the cuff, growing suddenly scarlet. Teddy's kindly heart sank within him, but he resumed steadily: —

"I thought perhaps you had missed one of them," he said, putting his hand in his vest pocket and producing the broken link.

"Where in the name of goodness did you find that?" ejaculated the other, with the liveliest amazement depicted on his face.

"Would you mind telling me where you lost it?" said Teddy.

"Yes, I would; I did n't lose it at all," said Jack testily. "I — that is — oh, confound it all, Teddy, what 's it to you whether I lost my sleeve link or where I did it?"

"Because," said Teddy, looking him squarely in the eyes and speaking with grave distinctness, "because I found it, broken, in my bedroom last Monday week after the parade, and I want to know how it came there."

"How the deuce can I tell?" said Jack; "you found it in *your* room? Oh, go 'long, Teddy, what rot you are talking!"

"No," said Teddy quietly, "I am not, and I mean to have an answer."

"The devil you do!" shouted Jack, jumping on his feet. "Well, then, I sha'n't tell you, so take that for your question," and he dashed out of the door and banged it behind him, leaving Teddy standing with the broken link in his hand, gazing after him in silent consternation.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER COLLEGE ELMS.

"I HAVE N'T the faintest idea where they are," said Phylis, from the floor, where she sat, surrounded by piles of dresses, hats, gloves, collars, and ribbons; "the silk stockings were once on a time in my bureau drawer, Félice; I have n't the remotest idea where they have vanished since the Easter holidays."

"But, mademoiselle, I have searched the bureau," said Félice despairingly, "and nowhere can I find them, and madame is so particular that mademoiselle should be *bien chaussée*."

"I know where they are," called out Penelope from the next room, where she was also in the depths of packing. "Look in the under drawer of the closet, Félice; I 'm sure I saw piles of stockings there."

"Good child," said Phylis; "I wish I had your head, Penelope, I 'd be a comfort to mamma and poor Félice."

"*Vraiment*," sighed Félice from the closet.

"Yes," said Phylis, "I know I am an awful pickle about my clothes. I never know where anything is; and if it was n't for you, Félice, I 'm sure I 'd disgrace myself and poor mamma many a time. Where on earth this hat is going in that trunk is beyond me!" and Phylis gazed with despair upon a lovely little creation of leghorn and pink roses, whose width and height seemed to forbid any confinement within the prescribed limits of the trunk before her.

"Don't forget your prizes," said Penelope, coming in, "for certainly you must take at least two of them."

"I can't take Mr. Milton even to display to Gerald," said Phylis; "he 's too heavy. I 'll put him in the bookcase," springing up with a beautifully illustrated copy of Milton's poems in her hand; "but the pin and the silver scissors go with me," and she gazed admiringly for the twentieth time at a pretty gold brooch and a pair of scissors which had come to her as prizes from Mrs. Paulding.

"You worked hard enough to get them," said Penelope generously.

"Just as if you did not slave day and

night for the French prize," said Phylis. "Some one at the door, Félice; please see what it is."

"It is a message from the photographer, mademoiselle," said the maid; "you were to send something by the messenger."

"Oh, yes," said Phylis, "the plates."

"I'll get them," said Penelope; "I am just on the way upstairs, and if Félice comes with me I can send her down with them."

"Oh, will you?" said Phylis, "thank you so much, Penelope. They are in the box — no, some of them are still in the instrument. I have n't had time to even look at them since I took them that day at Fort Meyer. Be sure you get all of them, and, Félice, please say that I shall not want them sent home until I come back from the North, and so they need not be in a hurry, as that will give ten days at least."

"What are you girls about?" asked Mrs. Gray, appearing from her dressing-room. "Oh, Phylis, what chaos! Will you never learn to be orderly?"

"Go and look at Penelope if you wish to be consoled for my shortcomings, mamma," said Phylis with contrite air. "I verily

believe she knows whether her stockings are at the left side of her top drawer and if her slippers are on the second shelf. I confess with shame and abasement that I don't; the one sole thing whose whereabouts I can vouch for is my riding-habit."

"Which reminds me," said her mother, "have you put it in your trunk?"

"The first thing," announced Phylis triumphantly. "Cousin Meta whispered in my ear Sunday night that she had a good mount for me, and you know I never neglect a straight tip like that, mamma."

"I am well aware of it," said her mother, smiling; "but come into my room, Phylis, for a moment. Your gown and Penelope's have come, and I want you both to see if they please you."

"Hurrah!" cried Phylis, executing a *pas seul* with delight; for, be it known, this was her first real ball gown and given her solely in honor of Gerald. "Come on, Penelope;" and seizing her by the waist, Phylis waltzed her into the dressing-room, where on two chairs hung the long-wished-for gowns.

"Oh, mamma, mamma, they are just lovely!" cried Phylis, clapping her hands; "and this is mine," pausing before a white,

diaphanous fabric, looped with great bunches of pink and white sweet peas. "How did you ever come to think of that flower?" and Phylis, struck by a sudden thought, became rosy red.

"It was papa," said her mother, quite unconscious of Phylis' blushes or the cause of them, "and they are so graceful and so youthful that I am indebted to him for the idea."

"It could n't be prettier," said Penelope, unable to help laughing. "Oh, dear Mrs. Gray, is this mine?" and she paused in delighted admiration before a pale yellow gown, exquisite in shade and mode, and admirably suited to set off her rare white skin and stately beauty. "You are too, too kind to me," and Penelope's liquid eyes were moist as she turned them upon her friend and hostess.

"I want both my girls to be a credit to me," said Marjorie, smiling back at them, "for Gerald is a very critical fellow, you know, and will expect you to be 'well gowned and turned out,' as the Yale vocabulary has it."

It was now Penelope's turn to blush, and mischievous Phylis emphasized it by a fur-

tive pinch, to her infinite embarrassment. But it passed unnoticed by Mrs. Gray, who was intent upon finding out whether the gowns fitted their respective owners; so Félice was summoned and packing was abandoned for the next half hour.

The Colonial express next day carried out a merry party. Teddy came down to the Pennsylvania Station to see them off, and it would be hard to say which was the more full of fun and excitement, Phylis or her papa. To Rex the joy of returning to the dear shades of his Alma Mater, with a stalwart son high up in college honors, to carry down the name for the ninth generation, was indeed a triumph; and the battle of life and his own senatorial laurels were forgotten and merged in his boyish delight at the idea of seeing the old college once more.

Phylis had only a second in which to exchange a brief word with Teddy.

"Did you take my advice?" she asked in a whisper, as he followed her to a seat in the Pullman car, "and what was the result?"

"Nothing — or rather, worse than nothing," murmured Teddy with equal caution. "Jack was vexed with me for asking, and refused point-blank to answer me."

"Then the mystery only grows deeper," said Phylis regretfully. "Have n't you any other clue yet, Teddy?"

"Not a ghost of a one," said Teddy; "but, Phylis, if I can, I am coming to New London for the races, and I may be able to find out something before I leave."

"There goes the bell," called out Rex, who was busy sorting the bags for Félice. "Look alive, Teddy, or we 'll carry you off."

"All right," said Teddy, holding Phylis' hand firmly. "Good-by," — then in a lower tone just calculated to reach her ear and none other — "don't forget me, sweet P.; I shall think of you day and night until we meet" — and with a rush and spring Teddy tore off the platform, waving his cap in adieu as the train steamed slowly past him and was gone.

Can anything be safely calculated to fill the soul of a maiden of sixteen or seventeen with such genuine delight as a sojourn in the beautiful City of Elms when Yale holds its annual gala season? Phylis and Penelope had their expectations keyed to concert pitch; even the somewhat long journey did not make much impression, and fatigue was forgotten when they descended from the train

and found Gerald and Charley Gardner standing on the platform to welcome them. Such a clamor of tongues, such details of ball, races, the boat crew; the odds given against the Crimson, the stakes on the Blue, — surely never was such excitement and pleasure before. Rex smiled to see how history repeats itself, and said so to Marjorie as they all rode up together to the hotel, where their rooms were already engaged. It was Phylis' first visit to New Haven (her mother had thought her too young to go there in Gerald's sophomore year), and yet it seemed to the girl that she knew every part of the city connected with the college, not only from Gerald, but her father.

"Ah," said Rex with a sigh, as they passed up Chapel Street and came in full view of the new buildings, the dormitories and chapel, all added since he had been member of a boat's crew, "it's fine and beautiful and modern, my boy, but it gives a wrench to some part of my anatomy not to see the dingy walls of old North Middle and a certain room there consecrated to many an hour of — well, not exactly hard study," and he ended with the laugh they all knew so well.

"I saw that room, Phylis," said her mother, "when your papa brought me here two years after our marriage and he had a class reunion. Old and dingy does not express it, and I always had my doubts as to the plumbing" —

"Did n't have any," interrupted Rex, "at least, not on the present plan."

"Therefore I rejoice for Gerald," said Marjorie.

"No college fence," murmured Rex mournfully. "How do you fellows manage to get on without that time-honored institution? I sha'n't feel like an alumnus without it, Gerald."

"Without what, sir? Oh, the old fence," said Jerry, coming out of an animated conversation with Penelope. "Well, we get pretty much the same thing in a way of our own." But his father shook his head; nothing could atone for the old fence in his estimation, as many another alumnus has agreed with him.

Next day was spent in seeing the sights and visiting Gerald's and Charley's rooms, all got up in apple-pie order to receive visitors. Phylis and Penelope were introduced to such a number of Gerald's friends, both

of his own class and the superb and elegant seniors, that it was wonderful how they ever recollected their faces, much less their names. As many of them begged for dances at the ball the girls finally became hopelessly confused, and while dressing for that eventful occasion fell into fits of merry laughter trying to describe their would-be partners to each other.

"Is my third dance to go to the little fair man with a budding mustache or the tall thin one in the gray clothes?" said Phylis, from her favorite seat on the floor. "I can't for the life of me recollect, can you?"

"Don't ask me," gasped Penelope, in a peal of laughter; "he won't wear the gray clothes at the ball, Phylis; how shall we ever tell which is which? I have an awful feeling that I am pledged to dance with that one myself."

"And their names," laughed Phylis, going off on a fresh score; "one is French and another is Cummings, and I 'm sure there 's a fat one called Rathbone (oh, yes, I do believe I remember *him*), and I warned Jerry as to waltzes, for I vow I won't waltz with a bad dancer, and every blessed one of his most particular friends has asked me for a round

dance. Well, we're in for it, and I only just hope mamma won't get tired before it's all over, for I'm going to see it end, so I promised Jerry."

"Yes," remarked Penelope demurely, "I promised Jerry, also."

"But not likewise," retorted Phylis with her ready tongue, as she seized Penelope for a waltz round the room, singing softly, —

> "'Sisters we have by the dozen, Tom,
> But a sweetheart's a different thing.'"

"Stop your nonsense," said Penelope, pulling up short as there came a knock at the door of their room; "that's Félice, and you'll never be ready if you go on so."

But it was not Félice; it was a large white box addressed to Phylis, and it bore on its lid the name of a well-known Washington florist.

"Ha, ha," said Penelope slyly, as the lid came off and disclosed a huge and fragrant bunch of sweet peas. "'Sisters we have by the dozen'" — but Phylis clapped her hands on her ears and ran off to put the flowers in water. This time she did not show the card to her father!

A very lovely pair the two girls were that

night, with their look of high-bred simplicity and perfect ease born of their unconsciousness and pretty girlish desire to please and be pleased. A complete foil for each other, a little murmur of admiration followed their entrance, which made Gerald glow with pride and feel the weight of his twenty-one years looming before him.

"Not your boy, Senator," said the gallant and courtly Governor of the State, who was standing with Marjorie on his arm at the head of the room. "I know the Captain of the Yale crew well, but somehow I never accredited him to you."

"I 'm willing to acknowledge him," laughed Rex.

"And the charming young creature he is dancing with," continued the Governor; "is she of your party also?"

"You have completed Mrs. Gray's enjoyment," said Rex; "that is Gerald's sister and our only daughter."

Phylis Gray will never forget her first, her very first ball. Perhaps never again will she find everything so joyous or see life through such rose-colored glasses. She had partners galore, and was the centre of attraction to the students; but underneath all

the fun and excitement there ran one little tender chord which caused the slender fingers to tighten lovingly around the stems of her fragrant bouquet; and as the waltz rang out its sweetest measure she saw a fleeting vision ever and anon of a pair of handsome eyes looking straight into hers, with Teddy's own honest glance, across the flowers.

But if Phylis' evening was one of unalloyed enjoyment, such, alas! did not fall to poor Penelope. She had her two dances with Gerald, and was holding the third for him when a most unlucky misunderstanding arose. Exactly as Penelope had expected, she got into a grand mystification about her partners. Her card was filled up rapidly after her entering the ballroom, and, to record the truth, she was so much taken up talking with Gerald that she did not pay the necessary attention to her engagements. Now it happened that, favorite though he was, there was one man in Gerald's class who was always running counter to him. He was two years his senior in age, having been dropped a year in college, and had rather an aggravating and superior manner which detracted very considerably from his popularity. And of all things in the de-

mocracy of college life there is nothing quite so obnoxious as a snob, and that was Perry Minturn's leading characteristic. And that Penelope should have promised him Gerald's third dance — that was too much, and Gerald resented it accordingly.

Poor little Penelope! She was not learned in the ways of the world, and she stood there, card in hand, as the two got stiffer and stiffer and more and more formal to her, until she literally did not dare to say, as she might easily have done, that the dance in question had been promised to Gerald two months before. And Gerald, with the true masculine tendency to obtuseness, never saw that it was the girl's own self-consciousness which prevented her from giving him the dance that undoubtedly belonged to him, and so he resigned her to Minturn with the most elaborate courtesy and never came near her for the rest of the evening. By that time Penelope's sense of injustice done her was uppermost, and she retired into her shy, proud self. A slap in the face could hardly have surprised Gerald more than did her quiet refusal to dance the last dance with him, and she turned away with an air of utter indifference and walked

off with Charley Gardner, leaving the young man standing in the centre of the floor in stunned surprise.

Late that night, after they all had had a most merry supper at the hotel, where, manœuvre as he might, Gerald could get no answering glance from Penelope, the girls were making ready for bed, and the morning sun was almost reddening the sky. Suddenly, under their windows, arose the sound of beautifully trained voices, as the famous old Yale song rang out from a dozen throats,

"Lauriger Horatius,
Quam dixisti verum!"

"Oh," cried Phylis, seizing Penelope by the hand, "it's a serenade! I never had one in all my life, did you?"

"Never," said Penelope, as much excited as Phylis was.

"Let's go to your room; we can hear them better," said Phylis; so the girls tiptoed in and seated themselves close by the window in the dark to listen. On went the song, the melody swelling into a chorus, —

"Rixæ pax et oscula
Rubentis Puellæ!"

"Is n't it just lovely!" whispered Phylis. "Oh, now they 're going to sing another."

The serenade went on until five songs were chanted to delighted ears, and then came the always charming "Good-night, Ladies."

"There 's Jerry," said Phylis softly. "See him, Penelope; there, behind that big elm. Bless the boy! think of his coming to give us a serenade at this hour of the night, after all he has done to-day and all he has to do for the rest of the week! There they go," as the party walked away, the song dying out in the distance; "good-night, I 'm dead tired," and Phylis vanished through the door.

But one poor little "blushing maiden" cried herself asleep for the few hours that remained to her, and Gerald tossed and turned on his pillow and felt like beating himself for a howling idiot, which was but proper humiliation under the circumstances.

CHAPTER XVI.

YALE, YALE, 'RAH!

NOTWITHSTANDING the late (or early) hours of the night before, Gerald was on hand at the hotel in the morning, not only to escort his mother to the station, but for the avowed purpose of getting ahead of several of his classmates who proposed going down to say good-by to the belles of the previous evening. Gerald was to follow them to New London, but he was coming over with his crew, with whom he expected to remain in their own quarters until after the race, and then join the house party at Montrose.

Phylis looked gay and bright as ever; apparently a ball did not diminish her energy or spirits, and she met Gerald in the hall, as she came out from breakfast, and, hanging on his arm, demanded to be told who composed the serenading party.

"Oh, the best singers of our Psi U fellows," said Gerald with wandering eyes.

He was watching for Penelope to appear from the dining-room, but she had already gone upstairs, and did not come down until she could do so under Mrs. Gray's sheltering wing, when she exchanged a shy "good-morning" with the expectant Gerald, and would not give him her bag to carry. But Gerald, having by this time recovered a portion of his wits, was content to bide his time, so he climbed in opposite her when the party started off to ride to the station; and while he was engaged in a busy conversation with his mother Penelope stole a glance at him under cover of Rex's broad shoulders.

"Why, how pale he looks!" thought she; "I hope he is n't going to be tired out for the race. How awful it would be to have him give out," and horrible recollections of faintings and sunstrokes attendant on over-training came suddenly into her head. "I suppose it was rather mean of me to give that dance away when I had *solemnly* promised it, so long ago; oh, dear!" and unconsciously a low sigh struck Gerald's quick ear. He looked up and caught her eye, and whatever it was he saw there, as Penelope was the last to descend from the omnibus, she found him waiting to help her to alight.

"'Give a poor dog a bone!'" he said in his own half-comic, half-serious fashion, as he tucked the little hand under his arm and secured that traveling bag at last. "Wish me lucky in Saturday's race, Penelope, or all the force and skill in the world won't put the Blue ahead."

"Of course I do," said Penelope, on the verge of tears, and terribly afraid that the others would see her burning face. "Oh, Gerald, I have been so anxious about the race. I could n't sleep all night for thinking of it."

"And of me?" asked Gerald with a tender cadence in his voice; "I behaved like a jealous fool last night, and you won't think of it again, will you?"

"This way, Jerry," called out his father, hurrying toward the drawing-room car as the train puffed into the station, and the half-dozen Yale fellows on the platform rushed forward to say good-by to the girls. But just before she got to her seat Penelope managed to detach from her throat the pretty knot of Yale Blue which she had donned that morning; and as Gerald's fingers closed over it she said, just loud enough for him to catch the murmur, "Will you wear it?"

That was all, but Gerald tumbled off the train in the greatest haste, and Charley noticed that the Captain was in uproarious spirits for the rest of the day.

New London was in gala dress when the party reached there several hours later, and Dorothy flew up to meet them as they descended from the train.

"I came down for you in the drag," she explained, "because mamma had gone in the surrey cart to meet the Redmond party, who came by boat, and she sent me to see that you all arrive safely."

"And how are you, my little maid?" said Rex, with whom Dorothy was great chums. "All ready to see the race to-morrow, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy, kissing him, "I've seen two races before."

"What a blasé little girl!" said he, tossing her up beside him in the drag.

"But this is much the most interesting," continued Dorothy, fearing she had not been polite, "for of course we all want Yale to win, and most particularly Gerald."

"I 'm afraid the latter has the most to do with it for all of us," said Rex, while Phylis gave the child a hug of hearty appreciation.

Montrose, Mrs. Winship's place, was out Pequot Avenue, on the water; and as the party drove along they saw the yachts at anchor opposite the Club house, the blue water glittering in the bright sunshine, and on the piazza of the Pequot a large, gay party, sporting the Crimson and just welcoming some new arrivals, evidently fresh from Cambridge and Harvard.

"Wait till Saturday," cried Phylis, her eyes sparkling with excitement, the sight of the rival ribbon filling her with keen zest for the fray. "We 'll have a good showing of Blue on board the Psyche, won't we, Penelope? Oh, how enchanting!" as the drag wheeled in at the gate and drove rapidly up the road to the house. "I don't wonder you love it, Dorothy, with these lovely grounds and that charming view."

"Which view?" whispered Penelope in her ear, for on the steps at Mrs. Winship's side stood a well-known figure — Teddy himself, waving his cap to bid them welcome. But Phylis' newly born instinct of self-preservation came to her aid; and though the carmine deepened in her pretty cheeks, her greeting was simple and unembarrassed as ever.

"Oh, Teddy, how jolly that you could come!" she cried, as she sprang lightly to the ground from her father's hand. "Such a ball as we had last night! I actually danced holes in my slippers, and I never had such a royal time in all my life."

"How about Penelope's slippers?" asked the voice of Miss Debby, as she emerged from behind the vines on the piazza. "I 'll warrant they 're in pretty much the same condition."

"Only more so," said Penelope, embracing her. "It 's sad, Aunt Debby, but I really could n't help it."

"Nobody wants you to," said Meta gayly, as she watched Phylis and Teddy disappear on the lawn and reflected that Anita was over at the Pequot under escort of Jack Haven, who had come down for over Sunday in the place of a Washington man who had failed her. "Marjorie, you must have had your hands full with those two girls, not to mention Gerald."

"I had the Governor," answered Marjorie; "the others never returned to my sheltering wing until the last dance had been finished. I wish you had been there, Meta; it was a charming ball."

"If only you had been there to dance a reel with me, Aunt Debby," said Rex roguishly.

"I?" echoed Aunt Debby. "Land sakes, I have n't danced a reel since the year 1."

"Then you shall to-night," said Meta, "for our hall is just the place for it."

"Consider yourself engaged, ma'am," said Rex as he went off to his room, leaving Marjorie talking lovingly to Aunt Debby on the piazza. She took the greatest delight in telling the dear spinster of Penelope's beauty and grace the night before, and an answering glow soon lit up Aunt Debby's face; for somehow this last six months had done much toward breaking down the barrier between her and the last child of her adoption, and Penelope, unknown to herself, was beginning to find the way to Aunt Debby's queer, warm heart.

It would be difficult to define Anita's sensations upon finding herself actually under the same roof with Teddy and Phylis Gray. Whatever had been Teddy's attentions to Phylis the past winter, they had passed unheeded by those most interested, because of the great intimacy which had obtained between him and the family ever since his

boyhood, and it remained for the jealous eye of another claimant for his favor to find them out. Anita's suspicions having been aroused at Christmas, she had redoubled her efforts to fascinate and capture the unwilling Teddy, and until the day of the garden party, when he had so clearly defined his position, she fed her hopes with the very fuel that consumed them. She had brooded over his few but most manly words until every syllable became a rank offense, and she distorted the whole affair until she hardly knew whether she most loved or hated him. Revenge is a passion apt to grow with the desire for it, and perhaps she did not realize that it was becoming a monomania with her ; in short, Mrs. Winship could hardly have done a more unwise thing than to ask Anita to make one of a party which included the other two.

On the other hand, Teddy, having extricated himself, as he imagined, from a most awkward position, put the whole matter out of his mind, and devoted his entire thoughts to the problem of winning Phylis. That she was very young, that Rex and Marjorie would probably deem it the height of audacity on his part, and that some fourteen

years intervened between them — all these points of the question were as nothing to Teddy in comparison with his ardent desire to ascertain whether Phylis still placed him in the same category with Gerald, or — rapturous thought! — in some niche or corner of her heart peculiarly his own. In accordance with this determination, Teddy had taken a short leave for a flying trip to New London, and was not sorry to learn that Jack had been included in Mrs. Winship's party, although for certain reasons he thought it advisable to join the others at New London instead of going with them from Washington. Jack had rather avoided him since the conversation about the sleeve link; and when Teddy found that he was going on with the Redmonds (as the Major kindly invited Teddy to do), he made an excuse and followed them next day, arriving, as has been told, just before the Grays, at hospitable Montrose. As far as the missing vouchers were concerned, the Colonel had taken that part of Teddy's mystery into his own hands, and the matter of the letter seemed unfathomable; in fact, it would have to wait until Teddy's return to the post.

At dinner, and all that evening during

the dance which Mrs. Winship gave, Anita neither avoided nor sought Teddy. There were quite a number of Boston people and several Harvard fellows among the guests, and these last were conspicuous in their attentions to Phylis and Penelope, regardless of the blue ribbons which decked the pretty white gowns of the two girls. Gerald, who had arrived with his crew, sent his excuses to Mrs. Winship; and although Penelope's evening was spoiled by his non-appearance, the pretty maid consoled herself with the thought that it was better he did not come and over-tire himself for Saturday's races.

Phylis had her dances, of which Teddy took care not to monopolize enough to cause remark, and finished up with a most merry Virginia reel, in which he was her partner, and where her father led off with Aunt Debby. This was great fun for the youngsters, for Aunt Debby, put thus upon her mettle, started off in a style that proved the spinster knew very well what she was about, and there was uproarious applause for the dancers when it ended. Teddy cleverly waltzed his partner to a seat in the hall near

the table where stood the bedroom candles. Anita and Jack (who had been sitting out the dance, *tête-à-tête*) were on the sofa; and as Jack rose, somewhat in confusion, Phylis said: —

"Oh, pray don't move; I am just getting my breath, and then I must go to bed, for mamma whispered to me before we began the reel that Penelope and I have n't had three hours' sleep in the last two days."

"Bed is the best place for us all," said Jack, lighting a candle for her carefully, as he saw Anita apparently performing that office for Teddy. "Has the Crimson converted you, Miss Phylis? I saw you dancing with an awfully nice looking chap who sported the Red."

"Do you know who that was?" asked Phylis. "Why, Charley Gardner's twin brother. It 's a perfect joke, but those two fellows divided on their colleges, and Charley went to Yale while Harry preferred Harvard; and the best part of it is that Charley is on the Yale crew, as you know, and Harry is betwixt Scylla and Charybdis — his college pride and his brotherly affection, and hedging wildly on the race. I was so amused

that I made a bet with him myself, with odds, of course."

"Take care, you will burn your fingers," Teddy was saying to Anita, as the match she struck to light his candle flared up suddenly.

"I 'm not as much afraid of my fingers as you are — fortunately," said Anita.

"If you had ever burned them, — which I trust you never will, — you would be more cautious," returned Teddy quickly.

"On the principle of the burnt child," remarked Anita with a sneer. "By the way, you seem to have something on your mind lately. Anything gone wrong in the regiment?"

"Why do you ask?" said Teddy, replying to her question with another.

"Because you have been burning such a lot of midnight oil," said Anita. "Before I left Washington it seemed to me that you and the Major spent most of your evenings at the office."

"We do that frequently," said Teddy. "Why should you think anything had gone wrong in the regiment?"

"You looked as if something had gone wrong with you," said Anita agreeably.

"Oh, my personal affairs are all right,

thank you," said Teddy, "and the Colonel is looking after those connected with the regiment, or the Adjutant could n't be off duty at present. Take care," as Anita gave a violent start, and the hot candle grease splashed down on her hand; "I am afraid you have burned your fingers this time," and then he told himself that he ought not to have said it, strong as the temptation had been, when he saw the dangerous light leap into the girl's eyes, as she lowered her voice and said with concentrated passion: —

"Take care, Teddy Frost, I always get even sooner or later," and she struck another match and turned away from him as Phylis stood up and announced her immediate intention of going to bed.

"I am rejoiced to hear it," said her father, coming up behind them; "these late hours are playing the mischief with my family" — and as everybody said good-night the girls sped upstairs to dream of the eventful long-anticipated day when the skill and muscle of the two great universities were to be arrayed against each other.

The sun rose clear and warm that morning, and only a light breeze rippled the water as the Psyche lay off the Club-house

wharf waiting, with her steam up, for the party from Montrose. On the piazza and wharf at the Pequot could be seen crowds of excited guests who had come to view the race, and the Blue and the Crimson were pretty equally divided in their ranks.

"Oh, dear," sighed Penelope, as she sat beside Phylis in the surrey, driving toward the boat's wharf, "it seems to me I see nothing but Red! Do you suppose there will be plenty to cheer for Yale? Harvard looks so overwhelming."

"Penelope Leigh," said Phylis in a voice of exasperation, "if I hear you utter one more such sentiment, I 'll duck you in the Thames. Don't dare to be faint-hearted when Gerald is there; don't you know he 's bound to win for the honor of dear old Yale?"

"Phylis' confidence is sufficient to inspire us all," said her father, from the back seat. "That 's right, my girl; never say die," and he gave the shoulder next him an encouraging pat as he adjusted the blue ribbon in his button-hole.

After about fifteen minutes the party assembled, and they all got safely on board the launch which took them to the yacht, Doro-

thy holding fast to her mother and fairly dancing with excitement. Then the Psyche started and steamed away for New London and the race course on the river. The water was crowded with every imaginable sort of craft, from steam yachts and sail boats to the smallest dingey, while on shore stood the long observation train, fairly packed with students and their various parties of guests, screaming themselves hoarse with the different college yells, until it seemed as if there would be no reserve force left to bestow upon the winners. The Psyche, flying a blue flag, beneath her own, slipped into a fine position where they could see the stake boat as well as the start, and then everybody began to talk as fast as they could, and Phylis, with her father on one side and Teddy with Penelope on the other, hung over the vessel's side, glass in hand, eager to catch the first glimpse of Gerald.

A mighty shout, a waving of ribbons, and the Harvard boys cheered vehemently, as their shell shot out from the boathouse and took its position. Phylis scanned them closely, and was in the act of passing the glass to Penelope when her father said quietly: —

"There, Phylis, look!" and easily, smoothly, with the beautiful long stroke which has made them famous, the Yale crew glided over the water, cheer upon cheer greeting them and their well-known cock-swain, as he sat in the boat sphinx-like, with his eyes fixed upon his crew.

"Where 's Gerald?" cried Phylis; "they all look exactly alike, oh! — there he is; you can't mistake his shoulders; see, papa?"

"Where did you say?" said Penelope, inspecting the bow oar carefully; "why, that 's surely Charley Gardner."

"The stroke oar," said Teddy, kindly adjusting the glass for her; "I don't wonder you 're puzzled if this is your initial experience of boat races. There goes the signal — by Jove! they 're off," as the rival boats crossed the line simultaneously and were away.

Phylis held her breath; her heart was in the boat with Gerald, and Teddy, ever generous, said to himself, "Bless the darling! — how she loves him," as the Crimson forged ahead and took the lead down the river. They held it for the first quarter, and Harvard yelled itself hoarse; then Yale

slowly and steadily gained on them, each clean, firm stroke told for its full value, and a counter roar of "Yale, Yale!" surged down the course. Rex, forgetful of his senatorial dignity, was shouting and cheering with the best of them, and Phylis clasped her hands tightly, motioning the glass away as she hung over the yacht's rail in breathless suspense watching the boats come down the home stretch, the last mile. Another spurt from Harvard, but it was too late now; Phylis never knew that tears were falling down her cheeks in her excitement, as she saw Gerald's broad, sinewy back bend forward with a mighty effort. Then the oars flashed in the sunlight and the Yale boat bounded across the line — a length ahead; the champion flag was won.

"Yale, Yale, 'rah!" shouted Teddy, swinging his cap frantically, as the Psyche fired a salute for the victors, while general pandemonium reigned on river and shore, and everybody seemed gone mad. The yacht swung around in the stream; and as she passed the Yale shell, where the crew sat calmly, the only quiet ones in the turmoil, resting on their victorious oars, Gerald

raised his hand in joyous salute to his mother, who stood with Phylis in the bow of the Psyche.

"It's worse than riding a race," sighed Phylis to Teddy, realizing with great discomfiture that she had been crying. "I must look like a big baby — but didn't Jerry row splendidly? Hurrah again for the blue!"— and she hugged her mother until Marjorie begged for mercy, and then repeated the process with Aunt Debby, regardless of the spinster's remonstrances.

The sail back was full of mirth and laughter; and when after lunch the heroes of the occasion, the victorious crew, appeared at Montrose escorted by Gerald, enthusiasm reached its climax, and Gerald suggested that Phylis should produce her camera, which she had brought with her, and photograph the party on the lawn. This proposal was greeted with acclamations, so Phylis went to find her instrument and see if it was in proper order.

On the way upstairs she met Félice with a package in her hand which was heavily stamped, and bore the Washington postmark.

"For me?" asked Phylis; "why, what can it be?"

"I think it is some photographs," replied the maid; "see, mademoiselle, the mark is on the envelope."

"Then they must be the last pictures I took at Fort Meyer. Graves mistook my order, but it does n't matter much, for Teddy will want to see them," thought Phylis as she took the package; and telling Félice to carry the camera down, she went to her room and carefully unpacked some new plates, arranged them for use, and returned to the lawn, where she found Teddy setting up the instrument under a big tree.

The party, with many jokes and much laughter, were getting into position, and Phylis stopped Teddy as he was proceeding to take a focus.

"Wait a moment, Teddy; that group will need some re-arranging, and I want to show you these pictures which have just come from Washington."

"Which pictures?" demanded Teddy, dropping the cloth, and coming behind the tree where she stood secure from observation as she broke the sealed envelope;

"Oh, I see; those you took at Fort Meyer. They 're fine, Phylis; you 've surpassed yourself. How did you get them?"

"I did n't finish them," said Phylis; "I was so hurried before we came off that I sent the negatives without even looking at them to Graves to be developed and printed, and he mistook my order, for I told him to keep the pictures until my return, whereas he sent them to the house and they were forwarded here. That 's good of the south view from the hill, is n't it? — and Arlington House, and — why, Teddy — this is your quarters, oh, look, look!"—

The photograph displayed a very good view of Teddy's quarters, taken from the gate, it being the very picture over which he and Phylis had had the discussion, but no wonder that Phylis' hand shook with fright and agitation, or that Teddy himself turned pale; for there, in the centre of the low French window of his room which opened on the balcony, stood Anita, with a package of papers in her hand!

CHAPTER XVII.

SWEET P.

"PHYLIS!" exclaimed Teddy, catching her by the arm, "don't faint, for heaven's sake!" for Phylis' knees knocked against each other, and for the first time in her happy, healthy, young life she felt as if her senses were leaving her.

"No," she gasped, steadying herself as she got her breath again, and making a desperate effort for self-control; "oh, Teddy, Teddy, what *shall* we do?"

"What could have been her motive?" said Teddy; "and I thought it was Jack."

"Mamma is the person to advise us," said Phylis, as she put the photograph, with its telltale evidence of Anita's perfidy, back carefully into the envelope. "I can't take a picture now, my hand shakes so; here are the plates, Teddy; what excuse can I make?"

"Make none," said he, holding her still for a second. "I 'll take the group for you at once; and if you go toward the house with the box in your hand, they will simply think

you have forgotten something. Your mother is on the piazza with Mrs. Winship and the Redmonds; I 'll come and join you the instant this picture is taken," and as Phylis glided swiftly aross the lawn Teddy took her place behind the camera.

Only two people had remarked Phylis's flight toward the house, so quietly had it been effected, and these were Penelope and Anita. The former was dividing her attention between the group to be photographed and Harry Gardner, who had come over with the crew, and (to Gerald's discomfiture) attached himself at once to Penelope, and Anita was flirting with Jack as usual, on the south side of the piazza.

Major Redmond, smoking his cigar, was aroused from it and the columns of his newspaper by a hand laid on his arm, and an agitated voice which said softly: —

"Please, Major Redmond, will you come into the library for a few minutes? Mamma sent me to find you; she is there, and Mrs. Winship, with Mrs. Redmond."

"Certainly," responded the Major, rising with alacrity, and to his surprise seeing that Phylis was upon the verge of tears. "Why, my little friend, what is the matter?"

"It 's very serious," answered Phylis, with a sob; "it 's about Teddy's vouchers, Major, and Mrs. Redmond is so angry."

"The lost papers!" exclaimed the Major, as they went across the piazza, meeting Teddy at the door of the library. "What on earth do you know about them?"

In the centre of the room, by the table, sat Mrs. Winship and Marjorie; Mrs. Redmond rushed forward to meet her husband as he entered with Phylis and Teddy.

"Well, it 's time you were here," said she, in the rasping, angry voice which the Major knew only too well. "Here 's a pretty charge brought against Anita; and if you have any information to impart on the subject, you will oblige me by telling Meta and Mrs. Gray, who seem to believe all that girl says," and she waved a bony hand toward Phylis. A scarlet flush mounted to Teddy's brow, but he bit his lips and kept silent as the Major said: —

"What is it, Mrs. Gray? Can I be of any service to you?"

Marjorie bent forward; she was very pale, but the old look of patient determination sat on every feature as she said quietly: —

"I did not know until a few minutes ago,

Major, that Teddy has been laboring under the charge of culpable carelessness in regard to some regimental papers which mysteriously disappeared from his quarters some three weeks ago. You are here to answer for yourself, Teddy. Did you lose them or not?"

"They were taken from my room," said Teddy, "the day you brought the girls over to Fort Meyer, where Phylis took photographs of the views at Arlington. I laid the matter before the Colonel, that evening, as Major Redmond is well aware."

"Yes," said the Major to Teddy; "you did, and a more vexing and annoying affair has not occurred in the regiment for some time."

"I am glad for Teddy's sake that a singular discovery has been made," said Marjorie. "Mrs. Redmond seems to be inclined to doubt what appears very reliable evidence; and I must say that I think, in order that justice should be done to all concerned, it would be best for you, Major Redmond, to bring Anita" —

"Who wants me?" said a gay voice from the piazza, as Anita herself looked in the window; "I'll save trouble and come at once," and with an air of indifference

she stepped inside of the room, Jack and Penelope following closely at her heels. There was a moment's pause; whether Anita felt the antagonism in the air can never be known, but she raised her head defiantly, as she looked first at one and then another of the averted faces, and said, with a hard little laugh, "Well, what is it? You look as solemn as a bench of judges. What enormity have I to answer for now?"

"Anita," said Mrs. Winship gravely, "what were you doing the early part of the afternoon the day that Phylis Gray came to Fort Meyer and took some photographs?"

Anita turned a little pale.

"The day I was photographed with the group on Mrs. Goddard's piazza?" she asked, with an effort for ease; "oh, I don't remember; talking to Aunt Rhoda and making a call on Mrs. Goddard."

"I saw you at the parlor window, Miss Anita, as I went upstairs to change my cuff, which I got all over paint from your door as I was talking to Mrs. Redmond," put in Jack eagerly.

"Yes," interrupted that lady, "I invited you to dinner that night."

"And I came," said Jack.

"Was n't it that afternoon you lost the sleeve link, Jack?" asked Teddy suddenly.

"Sleeve link?" echoed Jack, taken by surprise; "I never lost them at all, I gave them to Miss Anita — oh, confound you, Teddy, what business have you to speak of that here, I 'd like to know!" and he glared savagely enough at his friend, provoked at having admitted the fact.

Anita sat down with an insolent smile curling her lips. "You asked me what I was doing that afternoon, Cousin Meta; may I ask you a question? What business is it of yours, and why do you wish me to account for my time? I intend to do nothing of the kind."

"I would not advise you to take that tone," said Meta coldly. "There are some papers of value missing from Lieutenant Frost's desk; they were removed early on the afternoon referred to. In view of a very remarkable circumstance which has just been brought to Mrs. Gray's and my notice I would advise you to be quite frank and reply to my question."

"How dare you!" cried Anita furiously, her hands beginning to twitch, as they always did in moments of excitement. "Do

you mean to insinuate that I had anything to do with it? Go ask Teddy Frost himself; he 's looked for weeks as if he had a guilty conscience" —

"For shame!" cried Phylis' indignant voice, as she darted forward and laid her hand on the photograph. "Look there, Anita Duncan, and see for yourself a witness that cannot lie. At five o'clock that day this photograph was in my camera, and I took the picture with Teddy standing beside me, little thinking that it would protect him from the injury you were wickedly planning at the very moment."

"I beg your pardon," said Marjorie, as Anita tried to seize the photograph in voiceless fury. "I cannot allow you to take it, it might be destroyed."

"I confess it," screamed Anita, as Penelope crept softly toward Phylis, "and I don't care who hears me. You had some letters of mine, Teddy Frost, and when I asked you for them you said you had destroyed them. I did not believe you then and I don't believe you now, only you 've hidden them where I can't find them. I stole across the balcony that day from my aunt's room into yours, and I hunted over all your things to

find my letters; and when I could n't find a trace of them, I came across those papers. I did not know there was a letter with them, and I took them simply to get you into trouble and pay off a little score of my own." She gasped for breath and, before any one could interrupt her, went on furiously: —

"As for you, Phylis Gray, I hate you with all my heart, and you, too, shall suffer for interfering in my affairs," and quick as lightning the half-crazed, almost irresponsible girl snatched a stiletto-pointed paper knife from the table and darted at Phylis. Swift as a flash Teddy was at her side, but another hand than his turned the savage stab aside and received the blow, as Penelope clasped Phylis in her arms.

For a moment all was wild confusion. Scream upon scream from Anita, now in wildest hysteria, startled everybody, and the guests on the lawn were met by Meta at the window, explaining that Miss Duncan was taken very ill, as the Major, with assistance from Teddy, secured the shrieking girl and carried her upstairs, where he stood guard over her until medical assistance and nurses were procured from New London. Mrs. Redmond, bemoaning her ill-fortune in

ever having assumed care of the unhappy girl, received such a lecture from her usually forbearing husband that she actually did not dare to assert herself or utter a disagreeable sentence for twenty-four hours after.

The first duty of the doctor who appeared at Montrose was to investigate Penelope's wound, which, though only a deep flesh one, bled profusely and frightened everybody out of their wits except Aunt Debby and Penelope herself.

"Land sakes!" said the spinster, as Phylis and Gerald stood with pale cheeks watching her as she proceeded to bind the arm in a cleverly professional manner. "Do you s'pose this is the first time I 've ever done it, Gerald Gray? Go and ask your father what I did for him in war times down on the old plantation in Virginia. It 's lucky that luny girl did n't go a quarter of an inch further, Penelope; mercy me, to think of a wildcat like that being in love with Teddy Frost. A nice domestic animal she 'd be for a man to have round; I must say, I pity the Major with his women-folks. There, Penelope," and Aunt Debby gave the arm a contented pat, "I 'll warrant that will hold till the Doctor comes, anyhow."

But try as they did to conceal it, everybody's nerves were in rather a shaky condition; and Gerald, wandering disconsolately around the piazza after dinner (for Penelope was ordered rest and quiet upstairs and Aunt Debby guarded her like a dragon), came suddenly upon Phylis, sitting alone in a dark corner, her head on her arms, and something suspiciously like tears in the voice that greeted him.

"Oh, Jerry, was n't it awful," whispered she, sliding her hand into his, "and was ever such a heroine as Penelope, dear soul! I feel as if I ought to be lying there with my arm bound up in her place. Is n't she a darling anyway?"

"That 's just what she is," said Gerald, with such conviction that Phylis gave him a mischievous pinch, and whispered gayly: —

"Oh, ho! master Jerry; sets the wind in that quarter?"

"'A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind,'" quoted Gerald in retort.

"What kind of a fellow?" said somebody's voice at the other side, as a tall figure took possession of the chair by Phylis.

"I did n't say fellow, I only mentioned

feeling," quoth Gerald, vanishing into darkness again.

"You 've had a hard day and no end of excitement," said Teddy to his silent companion, "and your father sent me to look for you because he wants you to go in and rest. But I 'm such a selfish fellow, Phylis, that I want to ask you just one question; may I?"

No answer, but the pretty head drooped and the slender hands were clasped together, as saucy Teddy leaned over and possessed himself of them both.

"I want a flower," spoke Teddy softly, "a flower that 's sweet and fresh and simple — an old-fashioned flower, maybe, but as such far more to my liking than any hothouse plant that grows. May I pluck it all for myself, and wear it on my heart of hearts, not for to-day alone, but for all my life, my own darling sweet P.?"

And Phylis answered "Yes."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"RUBENTES PUELLÆ."

"MARJORIE, little woman," said Rex, throwing his arm over her shoulder, "it 's a melancholy fact, but somehow the birds will leave the home-nest! I see a little pucker between your eyes which your heart forbids you to develop into a frown; smooth it out, sweetheart, and tell your old husband what you 're thinking about."

They were sitting on Aunt Debby's piazza under the distant shadows of old Monadnock Mountain; and if Marjorie's eyes had a suspicion of a tear in them, it vanished as she looked fondly up at the face so like the lover of her girlhood.

"Oh, Rex," she answered with a half sigh, "Phylis is so young — and then just fancy — Gerald!"

"Has he confided anything to you?" said his father with lively curiosity. "I have only my suspicions to go upon."

"I don't see how I 've been so blind,"

said Marjorie; "Teddy seemed such a boy"—

"Of nearly thirty," ejaculated Rex.

"And Phylis still at her school-books; do you know, Rex, I'm half uncertain yet as to the wisdom of it."

"I admit the force of your argument as a rule," said Rex playfully, "but there are always exceptions, you know."

"Yes, and alas! the exception is in this instance against me. And then" (going completely over to the enemy) "Teddy is Teddy; there never was a dearer boy or a finer, more honest fellow than he. I don't know that I could wish to see Phylis in safer hands."

"Ah, ha!" laughed Rex teasingly. "I never said as much as that."

"Oh, Rex, surely you agree with me," cried she, alarmed. Whereat he laughed outright.

"You 'll always be a child in some things, Madge," he said, "and your girl is like you. We will not worry over Teddy and Phylis; after a year of waiting you 'll see how capable and wise Phylis will appear. But it is a little awful to deprive you of a *débutante*, and to have the child bespoken, as it were, before she is really full fledged."

"I don't mind that in the least," said Marjorie, "but I quake when I think how Meta will tease me. She predicted it from the first, while I" — with a doleful sigh — "would as soon have thought of suspecting Dorothy of falling in love. Rex, what does make girls do such things?"

"If you can tell me why a certain golden-haired maiden, not so very long ago, fell in love with a fellow who also wore the army blue" — But Marjorie put her hand over his mouth, and he ended his remark with a kiss.

Several days before, as soon as the Doctor said it was safe for Penelope to travel, the Grays, with Teddy and Gerald, had come up to Aunt Debby's for the promised visit, very much to Meta's regret. There had been a most untimely breaking up of her house-party, for as soon as was possible Major Redmond had carried off his wife and Anita. After the excitement was over Anita subsided into almost her usual self; one of the peculiarities of her physical make-up seemed to be a curious oblivion of her conduct during the attack, and, rather to Jack's horror, she seemed quite willing to resume their flirtation, on the only occasion of his seeing

her before they left Montrose. Jack was a thoroughly disgusted being, and felt himself tremendously injured, although, as Teddy reminded him, there was no necessity for it with such an irresponsible person as Anita had been proved to be. The letter and vouchers were, oddly enough, found by Mrs. Redmond in Anita's trunk carefully wrapped among her pocket handkerchiefs, though why she had carried them about with her instead of destroying them at once it was impossible to conjecture.

The medical opinion of Anita seemed to be that she might outgrow her tendency; although there was an hereditary predisposition to eccentricity, she might and probably would escape it. Mrs. Redmond, thoroughly exasperated at having her visit brought to so sensational a conclusion, could not be pacified; and the Major was finally obliged to promise that Anita should return to her Aunt Emily as soon as she was able, for Mrs. Redmond declared that nothing would induce her to inhabit No. 17 again if her niece was to form part of the household. The Major was deeply distressed over the injury to Penelope, and he and Aunt Debby became firm friends, for the kindly interest

and concern which he evidently felt impressed Aunt Debby at once, and, as she said, "*He* was no ways responsible for his wildcat of a niece any more than he was for that queer, fighting, altogether aggravating wife."

Penelope's hurt was nothing very serious, not half as bad as they had feared, and after the shock of it was over she began to regain her spirits, and the look of health was returning to her cheeks. Phylis was so devoted to her that Teddy began to look doleful, and that very day Penelope had scolded Phylis away, laughingly, for a walk with him and declared that she would find the invalid much better on her return. Aunt Debby had driven over to the village on household errands, and, leaving Hannah in charge, knew that Penelope would be well taken care of. But after an hour of Hannah's society, Penelope concluded that a slight change of scene would be acceptable; so she bade Hannah fetch down several pillows, and ensconced herself snugly in the dining-room window among the vines, on an antique sofa which was located in the shadiest corner.

Gerald, who seemed to have been for-

gotten in the afternoon plans of the household, coming whistling down the lane as he returned from an errand in the village, caught a glimpse of a white skirt on the piazza as he strolled carelessly along, and said to himself: —

"I 'll bet that 's Phylis and Teddy; he 's had her long enough for one day; I 'll just go and make a gooseberry of myself and tease Phil for five minutes;" with which brotherly resolve he slipped into the dining-room, meaning to go thence by the window to the piazza. But Gerald got no further on that mischievous excursion, for he saw what banished every idea of Phylis from his head, — Penelope, curled down among the red pillows, her dark eyes uplifted, and her rare smile dimpling her cheeks.

Gerald had always prided himself upon his self-possession and deliberation in matters of state; but the instant he beheld the pathetic little figure, with its slender arm bound in a sling, he proceeded to lose his head with celerity and dispatch. Penelope could never be induced to tell what he said or she replied, but not five minutes after, when Aunt Debby (having driven up to the front door unheard) looked into the

dining-room on her way upstairs, she beheld a tableau which, to use her own words, "brought her up, all standing."

"Gerald Gray," ejaculated the spinster, as Gerald sprang to his feet and Penelope hid her blushing face behind a pillow, "is this philandering epidemic?"

"Yes, ma'am," retorted Gerald saucily, seizing her round the waist, "and I have a bad attack; temperature up to fever heat, and Penelope herself the only remedy."

"You two children," said Aunt Debby, so pleased that she could hardly keep up even pretense of scolding; "what do you know about life, I'd like to know? At your age, Gerald Gray — what in the world is your father going to say?"

"I'm only a year younger than he was when he tried the same experiment," said Gerald, drawing himself up and looking every inch of his six feet and his twenty-one years, "and I'm not asking you for anything now, Aunt Debby, for there's my senior year at college to go through; but if, as Penelope is good and dear enough to say, she will wait for me — why, don't you think you could give me a chance to try for the sweetest girl in the world?"

"I give it up," said Aunt Debby, as Penelope stole her one hand into hers. "It 's weak minded in me, no doubt, and I 've got to hear what Marjorie and your father say; but so far as I am concerned I give my consent this minute, and the Lord bless you both," wound up Aunt Debby suddenly, with tears standing in her eyes. "You won't be taking this child away soon, Gerald Gray; I 'm free to confess that I can't spare her," and the barrier of years was broken down forever as she kissed Penelope fondly.

"Miss Debby," remarked Hannah from the doorway, "I hain't got no call to interrupt you, but the hoss has gone round to the barn, and Mr. Bartlett 's most tired waitin' for you in the sitting-room."

"For mercy sake," said Aunt Debby, whisking away her tears, "how long 's he been here, I 'd like to know."

"It 's mos' an hour," said Hannah, with a subdued smile, "an' I guess he 's come to stay to supper, because he 's all dressed up in his Sunday best clothes, and he had a kind of expectant air about him."

"I 'll see to supper, Aunt Debby," said Penelope; "don't bring him in here just yet; Gerald will help me get out the teacups."

"No, I don't s'pose you hanker after company," answered Aunt Debby with a twinkle of her eyes. "Be sure you sit still and let Gerald do all the work," and off she marched in the direction of the sitting-room.

"That 's excellent advice, sir, and I shall profit by it," said Penelope with a most mischievous smile, as Gerald caught her in his arms.

"Well, Hannah was right," said Aunt Debby to herself, as she entered her sitting-room, where the Reverend Abijah sat in his favorite corner, the corner that had been sacred to him for many years; "he certainly has gone and put on his best clothes out of compliment to Rex and Marjorie." But she said aloud, "I am real glad to see you, Abijah Bartlett; you 've come just in time to meet the Grays, for the Senator is going back to Washington to-morrow, and I should have been right sorry to have you miss him. More especially as he is quite impressed with your Sunday morning sermon; I always thought that was one of your very best."

"Thank you, Miss Deborah," said the parson, a glow of pleasure lighting his faded blue eyes. "But I did n't suppose it would

dwell in your recollection; it's some years since I delivered it before."

"Which occasion are you referring to," demanded Aunt Debby, "three years ago or six? Because I've heard it at those intervals."

The Reverend Abijah's face fell; he was not quite sure whether Aunt Debby meant to be satirical or not.

"It is a good sermon," he said modestly, "and perhaps I have presumed on my feeling that it was and have preached it too often."

"Law, how you do misunderstand," ejaculated Aunt Debby; "that was n't what I meant at all. But you always do jump at conclusions!"

"I am aware that I am somewhat given to impatience," said the parson meekly; "but we are never too old to learn self-control."

"I would n't worry," said Aunt Debby dryly. And then there was a pause.

"Ahem!" said the Reverend Abijah, clearing his throat; "have you heard how the haying is this year, Miss Deborah?"

"No, I have n't," said Aunt Debby, opening her eyes in some surprise. "How 's your crop going to be?"

"Pretty fair, pretty fair," said he; "somehow, I don't find Reuben Starkweather quite as dependable as I 'd like to."

"I should think not," said Aunt Debby. "I 've always had *my* suspicions of him; he 's too slick and oily. Have you come to the conclusion that he 's cheated you about long enough?"

"Oh, Miss Deborah!" said the pastor in a shocked voice; "is n't that being rather hard on him?"

"Not a particle," said Aunt Debby with decision; "glad your eyes were opened at last. Was that what you came to see me about to-day?"

"Not exactly," said the Reverend Abijah, hesitating and laying his neat silk handkerchief across his knees; "it had something to do with my call, I 'll allow, Miss Deborah."

"Well, what 's the rest?" asked Aunt Debby, a faint suspicion beginning to take possession of her.

"Well, Miss Deborah," said he slowly, "I came, after great deliberation, and I may say much prayer, to ask you" —

"Not that same old question?" rapped out the spinster, a flush stealing over her cheek.

"Pretty much the same, Deborah," said

the Reverend Abijah; "it 's nigh upon thirty-five years since I asked you first."

"And somewhere about fifteen when you did it the second time; well, you *are* a constant and consistent man."

"I always aim to be," said the pastor, pulling down the sleeve of his coat to cover a slightly frayed wristband; "don't you think you could — really — this time?"

"Well, no, I can't say as I do," replied Aunt Debby, straightening herself up; "I 'm getting on, and my ways are set, and I don't doubt yours are the same, and I guess we 'll have to go along as we are to the end of it."

The Reverend Abijah sighed gently; then he rose, and bestowed the handkerchief in his pocket, and took up his umbrella.

"I must be going home," he said slowly, and somehow he did not look quite as tall and straight as usual, and there was a touch of pathos in his voice. "You will excuse me if I don't stop to supper and see the Senator. I have a sermon to finish to-night."

"Good-day," said Aunt Debby, feeling rather queer in the region of her throat as she watched him go across the piazza and down the gravel path to the gate. He cer-

tainly was getting a bend in his shoulders, and those wristbands — nobody to attend to him properly; and then that Reuben Starkweather cheating him out of his eyeteeth — and thirty-five years was almost a lifetime, —

"Mr. Bartlett," the tall figure was fumbling at the gate latch as Aunt Debby's voice called him. He stopped and turned around.

"Did you call me?" he asked, coming slowly back where the spinster stood on the piazza steps.

"You 've lived a long time, Abijah," she said softly, "and you 've no doubt learned a good many lessons, but there is one you have n't mastered yet. Never be in too great a hurry."

"Why, Debby," gasped the astonished pastor, hardly able to believe his ears, "you don't mean" —

"Yes, I do," said Aunt Debby with a half laugh, struggling with a tear as she spoke; "and if you 'll come over to-morrow morning I 'll see about going to look after you — and Reuben Starkweather."

And Aunt Debby walked into the house and closed the door.

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